

**DAY-TO-DAY  
WITH  
GANDHI**

469

**MAHADEV DESAI**

**SARVA SEVA SANGH PRAKASHAN**





## **NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY**

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# DAY~TO~DAY WITH GANDHI

## [ SECRETARY'S DIARY ]

*by*

**Mahadev H. Desai**

Vol-7

( From 23rd May 1925 To 28th December 1925 )

**SARVA SEVA SANGH PRAKASHAN**  
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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

It is a matter of privilege for Sarva Seva Sangh to have the opportunity of publishing Mahadev Desai's Diary in Hindi as well as in English.

The relation between Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai is well known to all. Both names are immortal in the history of our national freedom movement. Mahadev Desai joined Gandhiji in 1917 and remained with him till 1942 when Mahadevbhai breathed his last in the lap of Gandhiji in Agakhan palace while in detention. It is amazing to note that Mahadevbhai regularly wrote his day-to-day diary despite his busiest routine with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai had such an inseparable relation that they were like two bodies with one soul. Hence Mahadev Desai's Diary means Diary of Gandhiji's activities.

While reading this Diary one feels like actually witnessing the various incidents with Gandhiji. There are authentic records of important interviews of Gandhiji with national and international leaders. Side by side with excerpts from Gandhiji's most important historical as well as epic speeches. We also find here Gandhiji's typical crackling of jokes with small children.

There is no other Diary in history of this kind except that of Boswell, the learned English writer, who has noted the events of Dr. Johnson's life in his diary. But the difference between these two diaries lies in the difference of the life of Gandhiji and that of Dr. Johnson.

Mahadev Desai had a knack of snatching some time out of his overcrowded daily routine for some extra reading. He had enriched his diary by jotting down some references out of that



study. Mahadevbhai was a voracious reader and a deep thinker. As we find in his diary glimpses of a critical study of his reading, there are sprinkling of a lucid description of some new places he had visited or a running life-sketch of some new personalities he had met. In all these writings Mahadevbhai's supreme literary genius is amply revealed.

The period between 1917 and 1942 was a glorious chapter of India's non-violent struggle for Independence. We get a peep into Gandhiji's innermost thoughts through Mahadevbhai's diary. This period was packed with Gandhiji's most important interviews, correspondence and whirlwind tours all over the country. A vivid picture of the social, political and spiritual atmosphere of our country in those days is graphically drawn by Mahadevbhai in this diary.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that such a publication is definitely an enriching addition to the world's literature. It is an irony of fate that Mahadevbhai could not live long to edit his diary himself. True to his devotion he died in harness. Late Sri Naraharibhai Parikh, Mahadevbhai's dearest and nearest friend, shouldered the responsibility of editing this diary as a labour of love for a departed friend. Naraharibhai himself was suffering from a serious disease. But he persevered relentlessly and completed the editing of about 3000 pages when he succumbed to the disease. It was a tremendous task to edit the voluminous matter which would run into about 20 volumes of about 400 pages each. The remaining volumes are being edited by Shri Chandulal Bhagubhai Dalal.

The original diaries are in Gujarati. First three volumes in Hindi, covering the period of 1932-33, were published by Navajivan Trust. The publication work of these diaries was interrupted due to some dispute over the right of publication. Finally, Shri Narayan Desai, son of Mahadev Desai, got the right of publication and he generously entrusted the publication of Hindi and English editions of the Gujarati Diary to Sarva Seva Sangh without claiming any royalty. Sarva Seva Sangh is deeply grateful to Shri Narayn Desai for this generous offer.



Sarva Seva Sangh has already brought out 9 volumes of Hindi edition chronologically right from 1917.

The English translation of Mahadev Desai's Diary is being done by Shri Hemantkumar Nilkanth. We have published uptill now 6 volumes of English edition.

This Seventh volume is a bit late to our previous schedule. We propose to bring out the eighth volume within the next six months.

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## PREFACE

Does a Preface mean a skipping glance over the book in order to draw the readers' attention to its special features ? At least that is how this is written.

This volume—a further report of Gandhiji's tour in 1925—is replete with novel incidents, remarkable expressions, and beautiful pictures of men and things.

For instance, the following flash in the darkness that continues to prevail, or rather to deepen in India. Besides a schism even in the Swaraj party, communal tension continues to grow worse. But where lesser men would quail, Gandhiji upholds the torch of faith with a tenacity all his own. In his Convocation Address as the Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhiji says :

“Let us not lose ourselves in the darkness of despair that has spread all around us. Let us not look at the sky outside for the sight of the warming rays of hope, but go into ourselves in search of them.” ( pp. 287 ).

But this is overstepping the chronological order. The eyes of India are at present focussed on Bangla Desh and it is a noteworthy co-incidence that, in order that the reader may have a glimpse of real Bengal, the book begins with Bengal and is largely devoted to it.

There is first of all the happy picture of Miyajan, a Muslim star-spinner of Khadi Pratishtan, an organization serving the



people 85% of whom are Muslims, though 2/3rds of its workers are Hindus. And does not the spectacle of Bharat forgetting the fact that there had been 3 waves of exclusively Hindu refugees and supporting the Government on its open-door policy today to accommodate, at considerable cost to herself, Bengali refugees of all communities, support Gandhiji's following view ?

“Hindus have absorbed Spanish, Italians, Huns..... It ( pollution ) is a later growth.....We were not exclusive. Hinduism's beauty is that it is not a missionary religion counting heads like Islam or Christianity. It has carried on absorption unconsciously. It has followed a sort of natural accretion”. ( pp. 20 ).

Gandhiji had the satisfaction to see that Khadi was in greater vogue among the women of Bengal than among those of any other Indian Province and that though the *purdah* was very much in evidence there, all of the women removed their veils before Gandhiji and a large number even before his party.

But in contrast with these pleasing sights, Mahadevbhai saw palaces surrounded by hutments, where dwelt the masses 'through whose sweating toil these palaces have reared their proud heads, but who do not, get even one full meal a day' ( pp. 30 ). The book gives further some old figures, which are worth remembering even now— so long as India remains a poor country. Lord Curzon put the average annual income of India at Rs. 33 and Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji at Rs. 23. When to this fact not materially changed even now is added the great gulf



between the rich and the poor in India, one cannot fail to realize the propriety of Gandhiji's advocacy of Khadi.

The first unforgettable picture in this book from Mahadev-bhai's facile pen is Gandhiji's meeting with the aged Badoda, Poet Rabindranath Tagore's elder brother. Here is a bit in it that reveals Gandhiji's trait. Gandhiji got down from the chair and squatted on the floor, out of respect for Badoda.

Badoda : 'Do please take the chair.'

Gandhiji : "Whatever I may be in the eyes of others, I must stoop here at least, throw aside my Mahatmaship."—as he did earlier before the Grand old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji.

The next incident ( pp. 45 ) is here reproduced from Louis Fischer's book on 'Mahatma Gandhi.'

"Wherever he went, he was besieged by hordes.....His deification had commenced. "I have expressed my strongest disapproval of this idolatry," said Gandhi.....( But ) Intellectuals too were not immune. One day Gandhiji's train stopped with a jerk. A lawyer had fallen out of the train, head first. When picked up, he was unhurt. He ascribed it to being the Mahatma's fellow traveller. 'Then you should not have fallen out at all !' Gandhi laughed. But the wit was lost on the devout."

A tribute paid in a chat is more natural than a eulogy on a platform. Hence the following appreciation of Gandhiji's intelligence and draftsmanship by Sri C. R. Das, one of India's foremost lawyers, is worth bringing out :

"What would have taken me 3 days to write, he finished in 15 minutes !" ( pp. 48 ).



Gandhiji's speeches before the Missionaries, first at Darjeeling, ( pp. 51 ) and then at Calcutta, ( pp. 129 ) have certainly not gone completely out of date, though the attitude of the Missionaries, now under Independent India, has naturally improved. All the same, if political, social, and religious reformers bore in mind the following dictum of Gandhiji, it would do the world a lot of good :

"In our arrogance we want to reform the world without reforming ourselves. 'Man, know thyself' is as true today as when it was uttered." ( pp. 56 ).

The event of the year—the sad event—is the fall of that sturdy oak of Bengal, Deshbandhu C. R. Das. It creates a big gap which Gandhiji thinks it his duty to fill up as best as he could. He, therefore, cancels his tour and stays for months in Bengal. His choice of Sri Sen Gupta as both the Mayor of Calcutta and the leader of the Swaraj Party raises a storm of protest from Europeans and their friends for introducing politics in civic affairs. But his speeches before Englishmen, before the Y. M. C. A., Anglo Indians and others allay much of the distrust he had thus raised.

"The Catholic Herald of India" observes : "People had their doubts about his friendliness for opponents. He is removing that fear during his stay in Calcutta." "The Manchester Guardian" of England supports this view and the local English papers express satisfaction at Gandhiji's clarification of his choice of Sri Sen Gupta. At the Y. M. C. A. meeting, the President's concluding observation is specially noteworthy : "He ( Gandhiji ) seems to combine more than any other man,



an ardent, fervent, almost militant patriotism, with an entire absence of race-hatred." ( pp. 196 ).

His experiences of his tour in Cutch shortly after he leaves Bengal depict a comic-tragedy which, besides revealing the anarchy of a despot made safe under the protecting umbrella of the British Empire, reveal how deep were the roots untouchability had laid in India. The last is the most memorable meeting there. "Gandhiji wanted but to throw up his eyes..... All he did was to address his appeal, to lodge his complaint in the Durbar of his Maker....." ( pp. 256 ).

The ending portion of the book is perhaps the most elevating and enthralling, inasmuch as it deals with the discourses on the Gita by the now world famous leader, Sri Vinoba Bhave.

And let this Preface end with the following from Gandhiji's parting speech before he left Sri Vinobaji's Ashram; "Our study of the Gita would have no meaning, if we were afraid that our peace of mind would be disturbed by commotions raging outside. Hence I refuse to be worried at the coming turmoil." ( pp. 330 ).

—Translator





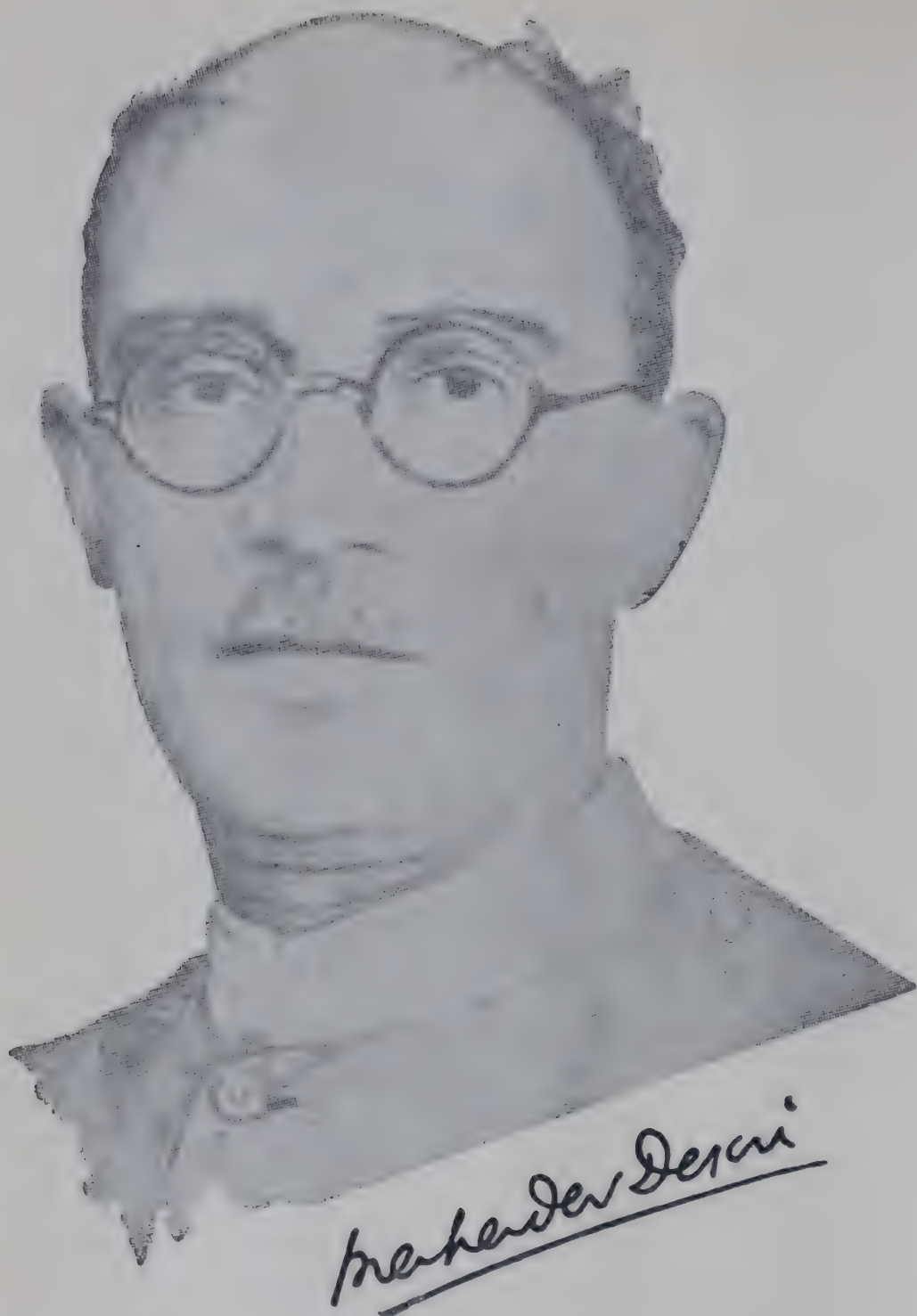
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Sketch by  
'Swamy'

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# DAY-TO-DAY WITH GANDHI

Vol. VII

"I prayed Him to forgive my sins,—but no. I did not ask that, because I felt that by giving me these blessed moments He had pardoned me. I prayed and at the same time felt that I had nothing to ask for, that I could not, and even did not, know how to ask."

—Tolstoy<sup>1</sup>

• • • • •

"But why am I yet seeking? Here He is. Without Him there is no life. To know God and to live are synonymous. God is life."

—Tolstoy<sup>2</sup>

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1. Life of Tolstoy—First Fifty Years

By Aylmer Mande, 6th Edition, p. 64.

2. Tolstoy : How I came to Believe, P. 51.



23-5-1925

We went to one of the nine centres of the Flood Relief Committee, namely Taloda, today. There are 62 workers in these nine centres. They go to villages to supply cotton, bring back yarn, and keep accounts. Satishbabu thinks of gradually opening primary schools also. The maximum expense per worker which the Committee has to undergo is 25 rupees. Many of the young men who serve as workers were trained at the 'Ganamangal Sanstha' of Bogra. The enthusiasm of these young men surprised me. It is Dr. Roy who has kept up, if not instilled into them, that zest. He mixes up with them all as unaffectedly, and plays as freely, as a child. Catching a lad by the ear he brought him before Gandhiji and said :

"Mahatmaji ! This is my Miajan. Who can take him for a Muslim boy ? But he is. When you were in jail, he was one of those who used to observe every month, the Gandhi Punyah Day, (The Holy Day of Gandhiji's incarceration). Whenever I meet these friends on my monthly visit, I bring *sandesh* ( a Bangali sweet ) for them and *sandesh* is Miyajan's favourite dish. One day I came here on Gandhi Punyah Day and, unaware of his vow, I gave him *sandesh*, but he refused to accept it and said, 'I am sorry. This is Gandhi Punyah Day and so my day of fasting'. And this Miyajan is the best spinner."

Shortly after, we saw Miyajan's skill. There were 32 spinners, everyone of whom spun from 400 to 500 yards an hour, but Miyajan beat them all hollow. He gave Gandhiji 720 yards ! And it was all even, well-twisted, yarn of 20 counts. They were all sitting in a tent, as they turned these spinning wheels. The distant sound of these wheels coming from the enclosure of the tent was so harmonious that it would seem as if some bee was humming. Even when we went right inside, the sound was equally musical. There was not one wheel which created a jarring noise. And their slivers too were a sight to see. I think the secret of the excellent yarn that the whole of Bengal produces lies in the superb quality of its slivers and that again is

due to their meticulous care in removing with their own hands all hard particles from their cotton, thus cleaning it perfectly before carding it. Miajan's slivers were as soft—like skeins of silken thread—as those of the zamindar of Pabna. And not only Miajan's, but of his friends also. "Here we all live together and move together and none of us ever cares to know or remember whether so-and-so is a Hindu or a Muslim" stated Satishbabu.

But a still more wonderful phenomenon of Hindu-Muslim fraternity was revealed to us later on. We were informed that only about a third of Satishbabu's workers were Muslims—the rest were all Hindus—and yet the people they served through their spinning work were overwhelmingly Mussalmans—more than even 85% ! When, in the evening, we went to see women spinning, we found that most of the girls as well as men and women were Muslims. All of them had excellent slivers for spinning. One or two girls were so engrossed in turning their wheels as fast as possible, that they did not care to know who was passing or standing by them. Gandhiji stopped near one of them for some time, but his presence was completely ignored. At last Gandhiji said, 'Will you not cast even a glance at me ? Here is Mahatma Gandhi standing before you. Do you know him ?' Not a word in reply ! When another girl was put the same question, she said, "I don't know him." But the fact was that they were to get their spinning wages even on that day and the girl might have thought, 'Why waste my time in a chat and lose some payment ?' There were two women of eighty among them. One of them had almost lost her eye-sight, but the thread she drew out was quite even ! And the wheel she was turning belonged to the age of her mother-in-law ! One of the women proudly said, "We are so happy ! The wheel gives us – me and my daughter—8 rupees a month !"

At the public meeting Gandhiji expressed his delight at these sights in the following language :

"I repeat here what I have already said at the public meeting at Bogra, namely, this is a place of pilgrimage for me. You may not know, as much as I, how great Dr. Roy's self-sacrifice is.



When I heard that this was one of his numerous activities, I decided to visit this holy place. When besides I came to know on coming here, that most of those who were helped through this activity were Mussalmans, my joy and my adoration for him passed all bounds. When many more Hindus come out to serve Mussalmans in this way and when Mussalmans will serve Hindus likewise, heart-unity will be established in its natural course. I deeply regret that neither of my two brothers, Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali, is present here to see this sacred sight. The situation in the country is at present such as makes it difficult for our workers to leave their respective activities. But I have no doubt that when I shall relate my experiences of this place, they will be delighted. And, to those Mussalmans who have come here, I want to give the good news that among the best spinners who were introduced to me it was a Muslim boy who came first in the spinning test. I for one hope that that same Mussalman boy will maintain his first rank in future also. I hope that those Mussalman friends who have come here will support this national service because a large majority of the farmers in Bengal are Mussalmans. I have heard that the Bengali peasant has no work to do for at least 6 months in a year. The President corrects me and says that they remain unemployed for 9 months, not 6. I know by experience that the nation which has to sit idle for 6 months in a year is doomed. God has given us birth with the object of earning our maintenance by labour. Those who do not follow this rule have to die for their own or other people's inertia. I hope, therefore, that everyone spins at least for half an hour and the peasants give all their spare time to spinning. You see the houses that have sprung up here, where this work is done. Those who give this help, will teach you to spin also. But we shall have to do one other thing side by side with spinning. It is not only necessary for us to spin, but also to know that the poor people get 4 or 5 rupees per month from spinning, only because we wear Khadi. It is, therefore, everybody's duty to use only Khadi and no other cloth. Let nobody think Khadi to be dear, dearer than mill cloth.

When moreover we all spin in right earnest, Khadi also will grow very cheap. For those who spin enough for their own clothing needs Khadi is cheap even today."

Then he said a few words about untouchability.

Mussalmans narrated their grievances<sup>1</sup> : (1) Untouchability (2) The cow question (3) Employment in services (4) Communal representation (5) Anti-Muslim literature (6) Press accounts of abductions (7) Worship of Mother Kali is against Islam (8) Harassment from zamindars and (9) *Pro rata* exactions of the *mahajan* (Hindu guilds).

Messers Cowasji Edunwalla (Parsi) and Adamji Peerbhai (Mussalman) were present. (Both of them rich businessmen).

Untouchability is not so strictly observed here as in the North.

Some of the above grievances are not due to the tension prevailing between Hindus and Muslims and some are entirely local.

Addressing the Hindus specially, Gandhiji said :

@ "If Hinduism wants to protect itself by an elaborate law of pollution, then it had better perish. You cannot convert India into a *Zazirat-ul Arab*. Hindus have absorbed Spanish, Italians, Huns. . Therefore, we shall have to reverse our codes of pollution. Unnecessary barriers weaken Hinduism, rather than strengthen it. Hinduism has contracted itself by the laws of pollution. It is a later growth. The purest Aryans' code was not this. We were not exclusive, we were inclusive. Hinduism's beauty is that it is not a missionary religion, counting heads, like Islam or Christianity. It has carried on absorption unconsciously. It has followed a sort of natural accretion. Why prevent the Hindu sweetmeat-seller from selling sweetmeat to Mussalmans on the same terms as you get chocolates from an English confectioner ?"

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1. The place and the discussion of the meeting have not been noted in the manuscript diary. Probably it was held at Pabna on 23.5.1925 and Hindus too were present there.



There is a small institution of women, called "Nari Shilpa Mandir," in Pabna. Its members came to Gandhiji with presents not only of their yarn, but of a nice *dhoti* for Gandhiji and a charming sari for Ba made from yarn spun by them.

The Zamindar of Pabna Sri Jogendrachandra Maitra is regarded as a very rich man. His wife is the sister of Sri. Tulsi Goswami, a multi-millionaire Swarajist of Bengal. Not only are the couple regular spinners, but all the children also card their own cotton themselves, make silken-soft slivers, and spin 40-50 counts of yarn from them. They presented a fine piece of cloth—the result of their 20 days' labour—to Gandhiji and secured by their earnest requests a promise from Gandhiji to use it. A gentleman told Gandhiji, "This Jogenbabu takes no part in politics. He took no part at all in non-co-operation. The Government also has a kindly eye for him. But since he is devoted to you and is a religious man, he does social service through an institution known as 'Hitasadhan Mandal.' Just then came your *mantra* of Khadi as a very effective kind of social service. He took to it as a duck to water and practises the *mantra* more zealously than anybody else." "Fine. I love it," replied Gandhiji: "I want nothing more than that a man should accept and propagate Khadi in a religious spirit. O, that is quite enough and more for me."

Speech before the public meeting :

"Sir Ashutosh<sup>1</sup> has disproved the charge that Bengal is wedded to regionalism. His gift of his favourite library to the Banares University is a testimony of his generosity of heart.

"You have touched the Hindu-Muslim question in one of the addresses. I don't wish to say much. I am so sorry that though I came to a province like Bengal, neither of the two Ali Brothers is with me here. Had any one of them come, I would have considered myself safer than I feel at present. But it is India's misfortune that none of these two leaders is in a position to leave his work and go out on a tour with me. Every

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1. Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, sometime Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, had the courage to defy even the Government at times.

servant of India is engrossed in some such work as cannot be given up. Hindu-Muslim dissension is such a terrible and tangled maze that it is difficult to come out of it. That is the right relationship which allows Mussalmans to do their *namaz* and Hindus their *Gayatri mantra* without any hindrance. Every one who wants to call himself an Indian should add this one article of faith to those given in his own gospel—be it the Quran, the Zand Avesta, the Geeta—namely, 'We, the inhabitants of India, will live with our neighbour of another religion with perfect accord and love.' So long as we do not do so, there is neither peace nor freedom for us.

"But it is difficult to put one's principle into practice. The rough and ready method for it is to die for each other's sake. One who wants to protect his religion must be prepared to sacrifice even his life for it—that is the law. I say to Sanatani Hindus, "Give up those mundane things which Muslims or Christians are eager to possess. If you do that much, there will be nothing else left to do for communal unity. A day is sure to come when only this behaviour will prove fruitful. But today I have become useless and helpless. My medicine is of no use today. But I say, "Let Hindus and Muslims fight to their heart's content and have done with it. Let the river Padma grow red with their blood. What does it matter if even that happens? Will Muslims emigrate? Will Hindus run away? Nature will take its course and settle things. But that is not the way human beings act.

"I have heard that a dispute has arisen here also. I ask you both Hindus and Mussalmans to make God your witness and then appoint an arbitrator.

"You have shown me quite a lot of charkhas. I congratulate you on the artistry in spinning which you have shown me. Where I have put up, they all spin—my host, his wife and all the children. They gave me sacred Khadi—'sacred' because it was made from yarn spun by themselves. I was very happy to see all that, but the charkhas used here are a painful sight. There is no charkha-expert in Pabna. Were Sir Ashutosh not an



expert in law, no client would have cared to engage him. There are laws with regard to this thing, the charkha, also, which we, the poor, possess. I advise you to buy the charkha made by the Khadi Pratishthan. You may say I am boosting that charkha. But just as Cowasji is a publicity agent, I, too, am a publicity agent for things that help in the uplift of the country. If you want the best kind of charkha in Bengal, go straight to Satishbabu. He is not after money. He has sacrificed his all. He thinks his is the best spinning wheel in the whole of India, though I have my doubts.

“After forty years’ *tapasya* ( penance or austerity ), after a comparative study of all religions and after observing those laws in the *smritis* ( codes of conduct ) of Hinduism which I accepted as worth keeping, I affirm that there is no room in Hinduism for that untouchability which we believe in and practise today. On the day when it is proved that the untouchability, as it prevails today, is an essential part of Hinduism, I shall renounce that religion and become an athiest. It was only after I came in contact with Mussalmans and Christians, that I resolved that I should be termed a Hindu. But if, in Hinduism, all are not looked upon with an equal eye, I would become an unbeliever. But I have such deep-rooted conviction in the matter, that I would proclaim that untouchability has no place in Hinduism no matter what the Shankaracharya and reputed theologians might say. And I will go on repeating my assertion, even if everybody boycotts me. Hindu dharma, Gitaji, the Mahabharata—all these religious books—teach us to look with an equal eye on everybody, to have one and the same attitude for the Chandala as for the Brahmin. If a Brahmin is a learned pandit and a sage, I may even render my homage and worship to him, whereas I may treat a Shudra only as a servant. But suppose a serpent bites both of them. Then I know that the spiritually wise Brahmin has no attachment for life. I shall approach him and tell him, “I have only one tongue and I want to suck up the poison of the snake. Whose bite shall I suck up—yours or the Shudra’s ?” The wise Brahmin will say, “The bite

of the Shudra, of course." That alone is real religion. That is why I tell you, "Do good to others. Don't be self willed and follow your whims. Observe restraint."

Tulsidas says, 'The root of religion is pity'<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to revive this religion of pity or compassion in India. I want it re-established in its former glory. In performing the foundation ceremony of the Hospital, you have done something that firmly plants Hinduism again on the soil of the earth. Pray to God to grant you success in that severe test, chant the Gayatri mantra, that you may get the strength and destroy untouchability completely. And I pray to God that He may help you in that work and may grant wisdom to Hindus and Mussalmans to live in peace and harmony."

Vardhaman (Burdwan)

25-5-1925

The address given here was loaded with figures of speech. The meeting became, as it were, a *mushayra* (a meeting of poets where they sing their songs or put questions and give replies in extempore verses).

Gandhiji's reply :

"When you were reading the address, I was going on with my spinning. I trust you did not feel offended. I have, on the contrary, shown you respect in real action by spinning at the time. It is not *abhinaya* (a theatrical gesture) but *vinaya* (civility), when I do a thing of first love to me during the time you are pouring out your love for me. I can, show you thereby that the charkha is the great religious sacrifice of the day. I may as well give up my food as my charkha. It was the burning heart, not cold logic, that showed me the wheel. God went even further and showed me that I might at times give up food, but never the charkha. I went on a fast and when the doctors thought it impossible for me to ply the charkha on a hungry stomach, God proved that it could be done. Hence you may feel assured that I only showed my love for you by turning

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१. दया धरम का मूल है ।



the wheel when you were reading the address. Spinning, besides, did not divert my attention from listening to your address. There is no doubt that I only strengthen my bond of love with you, if, while listening and spinning I can attune myself with God, remember the poor, and increase my contact with them.

"You have referred to the malaria endemic and stated that the prosperity of the region was declining ever more. You gave the coming of the railway and the spread of malaria as the causes of this rot. But the railway by itself is not responsible. The real reason is the fact that the engineers who constructed the rail roads did not possess the necessary acumen in choosing their site. They should have taken into account the effect of their embankments and raised levels for rail roads on the poor people's quarters, but that was not done. Owing to this lack of imagination, rail roads were constructed in a way that stopped the outflow of water through its old passages. It now becomes stagnant and hence the home of malaria.

"But this is not the only cause. Ignorance of hygiene and sanitation and the poverty of the people are the other factors. People don't get the quality and quantity of food they need. Without nourishing diet the man with a delicate constitution grows weaker and weaker. It is, moreover, impossible for such people to have a change of air, because they cannot afford it. The science of health teaches us that if a man has to waste his day in sheer idleness for four months in a year, that idleness itself breeds disease even though he has good food to eat and goes out for a change of air. We have thus to protect ourselves from three ailments - construction of the rail roads in a haphazard manner, our poverty and our inertia.

"The remedy for all these three diseases is the charkha. In Bengal, nay, even in India, 85% of the inhabitants are farmers. And Indian as well as English officers tell us that we remain without work for at least four months in year. If, then, we put the charkha into the hands of the poor and revive the old love for the charkha, their income would increase. Dadabhai Naoroji



( author of "Poverty and Un-British Rule in India" and one of the founders and Presidents of the Congress ) used to tell us that our average annual income was Rs. 26 per head. If nothing more, the wheel will surely increase it by at least 1 Re. per month. Satishbabu tells me that in the flood-relief area, our sisters get two rupees and a half per month from spinning. For them this is real gain. I was once playing with a baby girl. It has become my profession to take away their ornaments. That girl gave me as many as six bangles and now her grand-father also refuses to take them back. It shows, it means nothing to people like you to give away bangles, but can the poor do it as lightly ? I can carry a spinning wheel with me, but I can't lift up a farm and take it with me. If a farmer in America is impoverished, he is taken to some other place. If he falls ill, he goes for a change of air. But have we the means to do so ? The Charkha is, therefore, the national and common *dharma* for all of us. For the man who is born and destined to die in India, the spinning wheel is the best sacrifice, the best *dharma* ( natural function ), and the highest duty — all rolled into one. That impels me to say to every body, 'Turn the charkha.' But so long as middle class women do not turn the wheel, I cannot carry it to the door of the farmer.

"Our link with our peasants has been snapped. If you plant yourself in a village and make them spin, they will take the charkha with them wherever they go and earn for themselves 3—4 rupees even there. And who will wear the Khadi produced from our wheels if not ourselves ? It is we, ourselves, who must wear it and must give up our craze for foreign cloth.

"The air of amity between Hindus and Muslims is getting vitiated, but I am glad to know that there is no friction here among you.

"I am glad that the students admitted their own failing and expressed their disappointment at the progress made so far in the removal of untouchability. On the students depends the freedom of India. After this frank confession of their negligence,

I wish the students will remove it and become true servants of India."

Khadi or the spinning wheel is not much in evidence in the Hugli and Burdwan Divisions of West Bengal. There may be a spinner here and there—like Mohammad Yasim Saheb—but that is all. He is a rich man of fifty and a Swarajist, but an expert spinner. It was a pleasant surprise to see him spinning away at the rate of 500 yards an hour. Gandhiji cut a joke: "If you go on spinning like this, I shall have to be a candidate for the Legislative Council!"

Buildings and ware-houses of the times of the Dutch are still standing in Hugly. The workers of Arambag met us there. They had brought with them their simple arrows worth 2 annas (= 1/8 of a rupee) and the Khadi woven from their yarn spun by them. As they wanted to get many of their doubts resolved by Gandhiji; they had asked for leave to spend a night at Hugly. Arambag is 22 miles from Hugly and 45 miles from Calcutta. It was possible for them to reach Hugly after a walk of only 5 or 6 miles, if they took a boat and spent much more time in reaching Hugli. But the friends preferred to walk 22 miles through a jungle and bear the burden of Khadi and other things all that distance. That area also was affected by the flood and, when it subsided, these brothers went there to provide relief to the flood-stricken. They have enrolled 45 Congress members who spin their quota of yarn and 30 others who buy it to become members. The area they are serving is ridden with malaria and several other ailments. But I am giving this description without actually seeing Arambag. Only from a personal visit to the place one can realize how very difficult are the circumstances under which these men are working.

During this whole tour, people were exceptionally kind and merciful even during our night journeys. In huge gatherings also perfect quiet used to prevail. Comilla is a small place but 10-15 thousand people were present; at Dacca there might not be less than 20 thousand, but at both the meetings there was perfect silence and people were particular to see that there was



no rush and jostling from the crowds. As for the women's meeting, I have never seen quieter meetings anywhere else in India. Not only does the organiser of the tour, Satish Babu, but the people also deserve congratulations for all this. It is, besides, an evidence of excellent discipline and so a very good augury for the future. It might be said that too many addresses were given and the money spent after printing them all could have been better spent, but the cases of the addresses were simple, beautiful and exquisitely artistic. Most of them were simply hollow bamboo pieces with beautiful indigenous designs on the outer surface. Most of the addresses, moreover, contained facts which Gandhiji required. One or two of them were bereft of even panegyric epithets and gave withal detailed information and warm welcome. Most of them were in Bengali, three or four in Hindi and four in Sanskrit.

A large majority gave an account of the Congress work done so far. Only one address—that of Dacca—gave no details, though one of the workers there had promised Gandhiji to enroll 5000 Congress members! The figures of Congress members are not very hopeful. Everywhere except in Dinajpur and Pabna Districts the number of the self-spinning members was very meagre, as compared with that of those who bought yarn to become members. If one thought of the work done so far, one could call it just hopeful but we met with frequent sights that gave high hopes for the future. Consequently, Gandhiji has returned from the Bengal tour in high spirits. I have already adverted to the remarkable discipline we found there. It was notable, moreover, that there was not even a lonely voice of opposition to Gandhiji's triple programme anywhere in Bengal. At Faridpur the organiser of the whole exhibition was a Swarajist and a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, Babu Sureshchandra Vishwas. At Comilla, too, the moving spirits behind the very impressive gathering of spinners and the exhibition were another Swarajist, Babu Mazumdar, and his wife. Then, again, at Dinajpur also it was a Swarajist and a member of the Bengal legislature, Jogendra-Chandra Chakra-



varti, who was the whole and sole of the wonderful gathering of spinners. Such consistent support was not evident anywhere outside Bengal. And let me give other hopeful signs a little more in detail.

Bengal bore the palm for its women's meetings. It may be said that the *purdah* (veil) is still in vogue in Bengal, but at places almost non-existent. It need not be stated that no woman would veil herself in Gandhiji's presence; but even all others in his party could by and large attend women's meetings. Only at Chittagong, Dinajpur, and Pabna none of us could accompany him. But though we could not attend their public meeting at Pabna, the hundreds of women who came to see Gandhiji did not mind our presence and kept themselves unveiled. One of them was a Muslim sister who came with a veil. Gandhiji said sweetly to her, "Can any sister have a *purdah* when she comes to me?" Immediately the woman took it off. The *purdah* system has become so strict in Bengal, that right upto the middle of the bathing tanks, one finds walls of bamboo chips enclosing the roofs made for shelter. But even in these parts women used to come in large crowds to meet Gandhiji. There was hardly any among them who did not wear Khadi. I have not seen women even in Gujarat and Madras so completely draped in Khadi. There might be a few women in Dacca and Comilla whose clothes were made from half-khaddar and it might also be that many women came to the meetings clad in Khadi because they thought it to be the proper wear for such occasions, but, even after making allowance for these factors, I think that the number of those women who wore Khadi solely out of love and faith in it exceeded that of their sisters in any other province. And, there is no doubt that in no other province did women come to Gandhiji with presents of Khadi made from self spun yarn in such large numbers as in Bengal.

Exhibitions only of men-spinners were organised specially at those places where the *purdah* system was rigorous. The most attractive of these were at Dinajpur, Bogra, and Taloda. Till

then we used to see generally defective spinning wheels and proficiency in spinning never the less. But at these three places we saw not only the art of spinning at its apex, but the spinning wheels also in good order.

We came by a steam launch to Calcutta from Hugly. This four hours' trip refreshed us completely from the strain of our tour. Magnificent palaces with the steps leading right into water, met our eyes all along on both the sides. Any inquiry as to their ownership was unnecessary. On thick layers of greenery they had fixed in white stones the names of the jute mills to which the palaces belonged and the chimneys of these mills also could be seen behind them. But the sad fact stands that those poor peasants, through whose sweating toil these palaces have reared their proud heads, are so wretched that they do not get even one full meal a day.

Gandhiji has already written something about Shantiniketan<sup>1</sup> for the readers of *Navajivan*. Ever since Gandhiji came to Calcutta, he had a persistent feeling that he should see Badoda.<sup>2</sup> And when he heard of Badoda's illness, his mind was made up. The poet also had given him a pressing invitation.

30-5-1925

Reached Shantiniketan last night. Gandhiji was accorded a welcome in the Poet's 'Uttarayan.' A thin cotton carpet with various designs on it was spread in front of a *gadi* and cushions. Gandhiji sat on the *gadi* and the poet opposite. It was just a common, polite, talk they had at that time and then they separated.

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1. Poet Tagore's University and residence. His father gave this name ( =abode of peace ) to the place, because during a trance of 8 hours, he had the experience of supernal peace and as he came out of it this word escaped his lips. See Appendix I.

2. Big brother. Poet Tagore belonged to an illustrious family. This eldest brother, Dwijendranath Tagore was a philosopher and mystic. Birds used to perch upon his shoulders, while he remained in a super-conscious state, completely oblivious of outer perceptions. His father, Devendranath Tagore, was called 'Maharshi' ( great sage ) for his saintliness.



The very next morning Gandhiji had Badoda's *darshan*. Aged and ancient looking as Badoda is, he looks different every time<sup>1</sup> we see him. With a flower garland in hand he was sitting in a big chair. Gandhiji bent down to do his *pranams* ( obeisances ) to him and Badoda threw the garland on Gandhiji's neck. This meeting with Gandhiji made him happy beyond measure and his exuberance itself made him speechless. Perhaps he had lost all hope of seeing Gandhiji on his release from jail, but there he was before him in flesh and blood—after all !

"I wanted to come here so often ! But couldn't—till now. I will come down whenever you ask me to," Gandhiji tried to break the ice.

But Badoda's heart was too full for quite audible words. "It's enough if I have the Mahatma's blessings," he managed to utter, "my heart is full. I can't speak."

"But I know what you want to say," interposed Gandhiji.

Silence for a while. Badoda then began—slowly at first—"I know you will conquer. I know the stuff you are made of. You are strong. I am so weak!"... "Weak in body, not weak in spirit—and not even weak in body," put in Gandhiji. Badoda smiled.

"I feel as if I have had my second birth today."

"Yes, many have told me you have often said so," Bapu replied.

Gandhiji was sitting in a chair till then. But he felt it unbecoming and sat down at the feet of Badoda, just as he had been earlier at the feet of Dadabhai Naoroji 35 years ago. Then a veritable shower of blessings from the aged Badoda fell upon Gandhiji. He had every right to give him blessings, but was trying hard to make us think he had none. The surge in the heart, however, could not be checked.

"It is great—this thing you are doing for Hindus and Muslims," he said.

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1. Allusion to the Sanskrit line :

अने क्षणे यन्नवतामुपैति तदेव रूपं रमणीयताया : ।

—That is Beauty which assumes new forms every moment.



Then he said something about Shudras and Brahmins, which could not be made out.

"But why don't you take the chair ? Do please," he said as the thought struck him suddenly. "Oh, I am all right here. Whatever I may be in the eyes of others, I must stoop here at least, throw aside my Mahatmaship."

Then the talk turned to *Young India*.

"People ask you queer questions, but you answer them all ! Somebody prods you : 'You are like a *sannyasi*. How can you do all these things ?' This is all due to English education. But you have the patience to reply to all of them !" said Badoda.

"But I turn even silly questions to good account. And at times it happens that I get an opportunity to write things which I would never have written, when not challenged."

"It is sometimes difficult to answer all questions, sane and silly."

"But I can't complain ! It is a task I have imposed upon myself."

In a short time, Mr. Andrews came in and said, "Gandhiji will come again in the evening—just after you have had your meal."

"And also after I have had my meal. So even in our meal hours we are so similar !" was Gandhiji's remark. From the way he was speaking, it was plain that Badoda was feeling the strain. On that day, therefore, Gandhiji took his leave. But even as he bade him good-bye, Badoda said<sup>1</sup> :

विपत्सम्पदिवाभाति मृत्युश्चाप्यमृतायते ।

शून्यता पूर्णतामेति भगवज्जनसङ्गमात् ॥

When Gandhiji left, I sat beside him. He was very happy to see me.

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1. From the contact with a saint adversity turns into prosperity, death into immortality and nothingness into completeness or perfection.

"I always remember you. Have you kept up your study of Bengali?" And then to Anil: "Give him all my articles etc."

"I have lost my eyesight" he complained after a while.

"Where is the need? Take it as a blessing. It saves you from overwork. You would have done it otherwise."

"But I cannot recognise people now. When you came last time, I was able to see you. But now I can see only splotches and blots. I could not see even Gandhiji properly."

"But where is the need for you? तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ( When the man has seen the Self ), why should he care to see other things?"

"I haven't seen the Self—I am longing only for it though," said Badoda with deep humility.

Within these few days I had the *darshan* of three aged great men. Dr. Roy, Sir Surendra ( Surendranath Banerjee ) and Badoda. But all the three are very different in character. Dr. Roy once reminded me of the line ( in Gujarati ), "Be a child though your head be grey." But the line aptly applies to Badoda. Dr. Roy has not become a child, though his hair is grey, but has always been a child. His whole demeanour would tempt one to run to him and sit upon his shoulders! But Badoda has grown into a child from his spiritual pursuits, for 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Sir Surendra has neither remained a child nor become one. We can only do our *pranams* (obeisances) to him—from a distance.

"That Sanskrit verse ( the verse quoted above by Badoda ) is perfectly true," I said. Hearing my view on that verse, Badoda revealed himself as the child that he is: "भगवज्जनसंगमात् ( from contact with a saint ) is the change I have made. The original reading is विद्वज्जनसंगमात् ( from contact with a learned man )" said Badoda with a hearty laugh.

"Does not विद्वज्जन ( a learned man ) mean ब्रह्मविद् ( a knower of Brahma )?" I queried.



“Yes. विद्वज्जन does really mean ब्रह्मविद्. But nobody will take the word विद्वज्जन to mean that today. People think it means a scholar and nothing more and can the company of such a hollow scholar lead us from death to immortality?” he asked and again burst into a laugh.

In the evening again a crowd gathered near Badoda when Gandhiji came. But did he care whether there was only one in front of him or many, when he could not see? In that evening meeting the emotional surge had subsided and he was fit for entering into a long talk. His voice too was clearer. Out of his boundless love for Gandhiji a torrent of words began to flow, and who could stop that venerable aged man from going on and on? It was practically a long monologue. “I simply quote our shastras. Add nothing of my own. They say, “The first step of self-realization (ज्ञान) is *shraddha* (faith). Then comes *veerya* (power or vitality), then *smriti* (right awareness), then *buddhi* (right intellectual guidance) and then *pragna* (spiritual sight or wisdom). But you can never scale the ladder to *pragna* without *shraddha*. Gitaji (Bhagwadgita) also declares श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानम् (the man of faith attains knowledge i. e. self-realization) and faith has been explained as having three facets—*pranipata* (surrender and obeisance), *pariprashna* (repeated inquiries into the truth) and *seva* (service). Begin your *sadhana* (spiritual pursuit) with the faith that can move mountains and you are sure to attain self-realization. Once you have that *gnana* you can pit yourself against the whole world.

आनंदं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभेति कदाचन ।

(The knower—the man who experiences—ananda—supernal joy of Brahma is completely fearless). You (Gandhiji) are in that state of knowing the supernal joy of Brahma and you know no fear.”

He repeated this saying—आनंदं ब्रह्मणो...a number of times.

The spate flowed on: “I have faith in you, faith in everything you say and do. My faith in you is only a little less than my faith in God—only a little less.”

"What a pity !" said Gandhiji perhaps to stop this gush. But it would not.

"Oh, I have faith in you and I am glad I am still living at this hour. I had no hope this day would come within my lifetime. I had many dreams which convinced me that some Captain, some Guide, was sure to be born who would destroy this overspreading *avidya* (ignorance). But I was afraid I might leave the world before his advent--without seeing that great soul. But God is gracious. You came forth and I have even seen you : For me it is a piece of rare good fortune that I am alive in these times. Your victory is written by the finger of Destiny. All the darkness—*avidya*—vanishes under the fierce light of truth. *Avidya* means Imperialism, Internationalism, Bolshevism, 'all isms' in fact. All these will be shattered one day under the bombshell of truth.

"Let there be a storm of opposition, let people lose their faith, let there be violence, conflagration, massacre, but you will stand firm on your principles—that is my faith. Non-violence and truth will, like that legendary bird, phoenix, ever rise from their own ashes, though they be consumed a thousand times into the fires. Buddha did his work and it still lives. The *ahimsa* that is inherent in us is Buddha's legacy. Even so your work will stand against time—it is permanent."

And then he turned to the Maharashtrian politicians and to those who advocated violence and began to say with deep earnestness, "You cannot beard the lion in his den. You cannot fight him with his own weapons. You came up and forged new weapons. Truth is your weapon, *charkha* is your weapon, *ahimsa* is your weapon and therewith they shall be conquered. I was thinking all the day long what I should say to you, when you came here in the evening. Remind you of your own writings and speeches ? Absurd. And am I fit to quote the scriptures—to you of all people ? Ridiculous. That also you can do better. I was wondering what then to say to you. And now I have given you the light that God gave me after anxious prayers

Your faith is indomitable and how can a word from me add to it ? But I cannot help repeating to you :

आनंदं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्न विभेति कदाचन ।

आनंदं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्न विभेति कदाचन ।

Nobody could say when this flood would abate. Gandhiji felt uneasy. He cast a questioning look at Andrews, who also said, "It's best to stop him now."

"Is not this tiring ?" hinted Gandhiji gently.

"No...! Not more than other talks." Everyone laughed outright. Badoda resumed : "I am speaking out all this in the exuberance of joy. I feel as though this is an oasis in the desert. I only pray that the memory of these days may keep me well during the dreary journey through the desert that is still left to me."

"I shall do nothing to forfeit your faith in me," Gandhiji assured him. "I shall try to keep my body," he continued; "yes, keep it until you have seen what you desire to see, and then we shall both take our leave. It is a wrench to me to have to leave Shantiniketan."

Badoda also must have been feeling the pang. But hardening his heart he said, "Oh, no. The world is Shantiniketan to you." "They (Englismen) are but bubbles of time. Defeat is written in their forehead"-was the sage's reassurance at the parting on that day.

On the next day he entered into a talk about the Western philosophers and the Bible : "What should we accept, Christ's words or Paul's ? When there are the sayings of Jesus Himself, where is the need for reading Paul's exposition ? Kant attempted to thrash out truth by flights of intellect. To quote Shankaracharya's apt simile, he tried to quench the fire by throwing wooden sticks into it, and in order to become a believer in God he had to search for the roots of moralality ! Where is the need for all this roundabout search ? The Bible asks you to turn your left cheek when somebody strikes you on the right. The Jews of his time were so witless that that was the only way of



teaching them that truth, Whereas our scriptures have simply said :

न पापे प्रतिपापं स्यात् ।

(One should not sin against a sinner) and in that short half-line is given the quintessence of all morality and practical action."

Letter to Vaze :

@ "I have carefully gone through your memorandum. It is very valuable and closely reasoned. But there is a chance of its being understood to mean that you will favour, if there was to be a choice, legislative discrimination. So far as I can see, you will make no choice. A statute is a difficult thing to amend. A regulation or mere practice without regulation can be easily varied. Only some of us can become judges, but how would we relish the idea of a whole class being statutorily excluded? The proposed legal bar would not affect perhaps a single Asiatic. Nevertheless, it must be resisted. The formula is : No legal bar and no stiffening of the administrative distinction, but, on the contrary, a relaxation of administrative inequality. I know all the parties on the stage. In spite of the proverbial slimness of Smuts, he is more equitable than Hertzog or Beyer or Cresswell. I tell you these things merely to help you to make your position clearer. If, however, you are of opinion that, in any event, if discrimination has to be made, it must be solidified into legislation, I have nothing to say. Only in that case we must agree to differ. Even in the extreme case of Australia, when the Australian statesmen wish to become reasonable, they can do so without resort to any legislative amendment."

[ The following is reproduced from Sri Mahadev Desai's article in *Young India* of d. 2. 7. 1925. It is based on the notes in his manuscript diary where the name of the interviewer is not given—Translator. ]

@ In spite of the newspapers being full of suggestions from certain quarters about the revision of the present (spinning franchise, it was rather surprising that nowhere in Bengal was the question raised by friends who came to interview

Gandhiji. But a friend did come questioning the whole of the Khaddar movement.

"We are repeating our past mistakes, Mahatmaji," he said : "In 1905-1918 we built a house of cards which broke down no sooner than it was put up and we are in for the same thing now."

G : "You compare the earlier Swadeshi Movement with the present ? You forget that we have no fireworks now, but only quiet work."

I : (Interviewer) : "I know it, sir, but there is no organisation."

G : "pardon me, you are ignorant of the state of things. Do you know that we have the best organisations in Bengal, Tamilnad, and Gujarat for example ? you think institutions like Khadi Pratishthan and Abhoy Ashram, Comilla, are going to die ?"

I : "But how will they go on ? We are living on subsistence allowance and asking our young men to do with less. How long can it go on ?"

G : "How long ? Why, our whole history is replete with it. You think our young men have no grit ? They have gone to their work with eyes open and they are not going to give it up, whatever happens. The Abhoy Ashram, which I saw a few days ago, is situated on a beautiful spot; they have got clean nice little huts, a beautiful tank, and a plot of land. They cook their own food, do their own scavenging, and make both ends meet from the proceeds of a hospital. Dr. Suresh is no child, he knows his business and he will see that his Khaddar work goes on increasing every day, whatever happens to him and his co-workers. And Khadi Pratishthan, whose rates are very high you say, has at the present moment more orders than they can cope with. Look at Satish Babu's work. Have you ever been to the flood areas ? From flood relief they have embarked upon permanent relief work. And I may tell you that Khadi Pratishthan does not believe in

subsistence allowance. It pays its workers their market wages."

I : "Well, sir, it is your visit that has created a boom."

G : It does not matter. You may call it a blister. It will fall back to its normal state which is quite satisfactory. And go to yarn-hat (market). Where only a few maunds (1 md – 80 lbs) of yarn was being sold, hundreds of maunds are being sold today. There are hundreds of families supplementing, if not earning, their livelihood from their charkha. It is a sight to see how workers are besieged by people asking for cotton to spin, on the market days. 'And if these workers retired from their field what could happen?' You may ask. But they cannot retire. They did not give up their fine careers for nothing. The Abhoy Ashram men have got three strings to their bow, a hospital from which they find the wherewithals and which Suresh Babu thinks of supplementing by a medical school, and he has got enough medical talents and besides the Khadi work which is the main thing, they are running a big boys' school, hoping to have greater hold on the people through the boys. Then there are Pravartak Sangh workers. I do not know their work, but I know they are as many as 200 and they are working against tremendous odds."

"But there are only three such institutions," said the questioner still unsatisfied.

"By no means. There are many more working away in their humble way, and if they were only three, what then? There are men like Jamnalalji, Rajagopalachariar, Shankarlal Banker, giving all their twentyfour hours to the work, working with devotion and dogged pertinacity. They are working with patience to wait for a century if necessary, and working with the desire to succeed tomorrow. And you do not know how the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-8 differs from the present. It was a movement magnificent in conception. But it had no knowledge of organisation behind it. It made the boycott of British cloth a



shibboleth, and relied on the broken reeds of the mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad. Today you are guarding against all the disasters that attended the earlier enterprise. Today you bid fair to show that if all the mills in India were burnt down, you can clothe the whole of India by cloth produced by your cottage spinners and weavers."

I : "Let us not be too sure. You know of people who in those days had to hang themselves for want of cloth."

G : "You are talking of the days of Noah, my friend. Weavers were then deluded into the belief that they could not weave except with machine—spun or foreign yarn. Today I am asking the whole organisation to be taken into intelligent hands. No movement can be made universal unless it can be propagated entirely without foreign agency. But I ask you to study things, study the price of Khaddar in the beginning of the movement and today ; study the quality of it; study the yarn we are producing; in short, study the evolution of the Charkha and Khaddar and then say what you have to say."

I : "Can't we depend on the growth of our mill-industry ?"

G : "I have often shown in the pages of *Young India* the fallacy of those who argue in favour of the mills and shall not labour the point today. I do not want to depend on mills, I want the mills to depend on me. That is the long and short of it."

I : "We can have national mills."

G : "Well, he who suggests a proposition must work it out himself."

I do not know whether he went away convinced, but he apologised for having tired Gandhiji who assured him that no one could tire him out on the Charkha.

[ This is another dialogue not expressly stated with whom, but presumably with Mr. Fernand Benoit. The word 'Benoit' is written in the margin in the manuscript diary and Mr. Fernand Benoit was at the time a professor in Shantiniketan—Editor. 'This and several other passages

preceding and succeeding, have been made up from significant words or phrases written in the manuscript diary'—Translator. ]

@ B : "Do you know the culture of the West ?"

G : "Fairly, if not thoroughly, I kept my ears open and lips sealed and have been able to study Europe. I spent 20 years in South Africa, that bright gem of the British Empire. I have been able to watch them when they are able to live a restrained life in their own country. It is the test of a man's worth—the European in South Africa. Torn from his surroundings, he runs riot with impunity. Their civilization, I found, was a seedy civilization. Honesty is already at a discount. It is a virtue to be dishonest. The mask of honesty you do put on. In small things there is honesty—this honesty of theirs—but not in big crises. I discovered a book—Wallace's. He says, inspite of all the vaunted civilization of the West, testing by character there was no progress made. Taking vices they were all there."

B : "It is. But they are all dying."

G : "But the great majority have a craving for life. This non-violence will find a repurcussion in Europe as soon as it finds its way in European countries, I tell you, but when you find it in the simplest form, for instance, in my book "Indian Home Rule." It is an actual dialogue. Not with me personally but with many. And it contains talks with different average middle class men. It was written in Gujarati. When the Government prohibited the book, I answered by making a translation of the book, which was done for a German friend. The translation was ready when the telegram, prohibiting the Gujarati book only, came."

B : "What I personally feel is that Europe won't respond. The ordinary man requires a sign, a concrete result."

G : "They are eager to know, but not to act. There is besides the danger of their misunderstanding it. For instance, passive resistance which is but a parody of violence. Non-violence can be the weapon of the weak, but the leader must

be a strong man - full of love based on immense strength. Some Germans did try it. But with no result. As for the passive resistance of the suffragette, I fought Mrs. Pankhurst. She flew into a rage. 'What do you know, young man, about it?' she burst out. And then, 'I send for you, ladies, to burn buildings, break post offices.' Her daughter also was with her. Only one who listened to me was Madame Despard.

"Every other thing has been tried and failed. Brute force has had the fullest chance and no one is happier or more moral or more courageous for it. The world is not even richer in wealth. There are millionaires, but no even distribution of wealth. There is groaning pauperism in Germany, France and England— Oh, even in Denmark and elsewhere. There is much less misery in these small countries because they escaped the war. If we do it by violence, we cannot avoid a civil war. If Swaraj is an evolution, i. e., gaining it by non-violent means, then all other problems will have solved themselves. There will be equal distribution of 600 million rupees (The figure of imported cloth) amongst the poorest of the land. That is why I said, "I am engaged in forming the largest co-operative society in the world." I shall have to placate the Mussalmans, the non-Brahmins and others before I succeed in the spinning wheel. The Premier and Englishmen will then have acquired a proper perspective. The Indian capitalist is a poor ( peaceful ) man. He has no fight in him. The zamindar is called a Sircar<sup>1</sup> or a gentleman. He is either one or both. He will not go to the extent of being so ruthless that he will cut off the heads of ryots. He will quail when the matter comes to the shedding of blood. He will tremble. He can't be a rank atheist— like the European working man or rich man. He says, 'I have built bridges, aeroplanes, subdued Nature. I defy

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1. Indian ryots used to loyalty to the reigning ruler, whoever he be, called even the East India Company 'Sircar Mabap,' = Government which is our parent. Hence, Sircar here means 'Father.'



God." But Nature refuses to be refined, to be subdued. Buckle says Nature is supreme in the East. There (in the West) man is on the war-path, he speaks, 'we subdue it'."

Talks were going on frequently with the Poet Rabindranath Tagore also. It seemed to me that his faith in the spinning wheel had grown. He put very nice and searching questions on Khadi. I said : "The spinning wheel is deeply rooted in Bengal. Spinning is as natural to the Bangali, as swimming." He was surprised and pleased and said, "Yes, Gandhiji was telling me the same thing. There is Mongol blood in the Bengalis. They are born artists." Despite his bad health, the poet teaches the children of Shantiniketan for 2 hours. I attended his Bengali class once. Because of my presence, or God knows why, it happened that the poem he read on that day echoed as it were the prophesy of Badoda (—Elder brother. Here Dwijendranath Tagore). Badoda called Gandhiji's message undying like the fabled bird phoenix, and the poet exhorts the soul-bird to be bent upon crossing the ocean without minding the difficulties that block the way.

[ Sri Mahadevbhai gives here the whole Bengali poem —'आरे बिहंग मोर, आरे बिहंग मोर ; एखनि अंध, बंध कोरोना पाखा'— in Gujarati script and proceeds : ]

I will not translate the whole poem, but here is the gist :-

"The situation is frightful. Darkness has overwhelmed all the directions. Despair and fear stalk the land. It is not the gentle murmur of the forest trees that strikes the ear, but raging roar of the wild waves. There is no shelter at hand—no branch of a tree, no nest. Death is waiting eagerly to swallow you up in the heaving billows it has raised. And yet, 'O, my bird, have no fear; refuse to submit to blind faith or to fold up your wings, but, armed with the resolve to reach the opposite shore at any cost, fly ! On and on !'

Discussing this poem, the Poet said that it represented in another form the pith and marrow of that other poem (also his):

“ 'T is not for you to weep and worry  
Though things with you may all go awry.”

Gandhiji thus took leave of Shantiniketan with this message of the Poet and the blessings of Badoda in his pocket. But before he left, he had a long talk with the teachers of Shantiniketan ( the Poet's national school ) and Vishwabharati (World university, another institution of his where savants of many countries had joined as professors ) and those boys and girls who had not left for their homes for the vacation.

“I don't ask you to renounce any of your pet pursuits—poetry or music or literature. No, I ask you to give up nothing. All I want from you is to add to your occupation half an hour of spinning. Nobody has ever pleaded before me that he cannot spare even that half hour. The wheel is an antidote against our regionalism. As things stand, the North Indian, when he goes to Bengal, introduces as a Hindustani. The Bengali staying in other provinces regards himself an alien. South Indians become 'foreigners' when they go to North India. The spinning wheel is the one means which creates in all of us the consciousness that we are all sons and daughters of one and the same motherland. We have not till now convinced the world that we mean business. Let us now show it at least one solid achievement. Boycott of foreign cloth is the one programme which can be successfully carried out, and the credit for which shared by one and all. Untouchability is the bane of only Hinduism. Hindu-Muslim feuds will end in the natural process of time, but without Khaddar the whole country will continue to rot in misery. There is a disease in Central Africa, the sleeping sickness, which keeps the victim in stupor for months together, till at last he dies. Nothing can cure us of the pervading sleeping sickness in the country except the spinning wheel.” etc. etc.

I was told that many people were profoundly affected by this talk and that many are going to order spinning wheels and spin regularly. This second visit of Shantiniketan, therefore, may well be termed a significant success.



Gandhiji returned to Calcutta from Shantiniketan on 2. 6. 1925. The reader might not have forgotten that when Shrimati Aparnadevi had seen Gandhiji during the preceding visit he had asked her to draw out yarn of even thickness. Exactly a month after, the sister came up again and amazed Gandhiji with her present of 4 hanks of 500 yards each — everyone neither less nor more than of 186 counts.

Gandhiji went from Calcutta straight to Darjeeling as Deshbandhu Das had given him a very pressing invitation and he himself needed rest and recuperation from a whole month's strenuous touring.

For Darjeeling, we go straight north from Calcutta by the standard railway gauge right up to Parvatipura and then change into a metre gauge train for Siliguri, which we reach after about two hours' journey.

There was a lawyer in our train who got down at an intervening station. Just as he was putting his foot on the foot-board, the train started and he slipped and fell. His son saw him falling, pulled the chain and the train stopped after going one or two hundred yards. The lawyer got up unscathed. When the train arrived at the next station, he came to Gandhiji, fell down at his feet and exclaimed, "It was only your presence that saved me from death today." And then he narrated the accident in detail. But Gandhiji dismissed this blind faith with a joke. "Why not say it was exactly my presence that brought about this accident? But for it there would have been none!" I am not sure that the joke was not lost upon the gentleman, a lawyer though he was.

Then a light train takes us from Siliguri to Darjeeling. The road is level for about 2 or 3 miles and then the ascent begins. It goes on 51 miles and takes us 8000 ft. high. Then the road descends 1000 feet to reach Darjeeling. Clouds begin to close up thick around us as we reach the height of about 3000 feet and we can see nothing beyond a few yards of us. A surging sea of clouds all around is all that is visible.



It was even raining fairly heavily on the day we travelled. Streamlets scampering and jumping down high hills could be seen only when they came up right at our feet. The climb is nearly equal to that at Simla, though the road from Kalka to Simla is longer, 64 miles. The landscape is very similar to that of the ghats in the monsoon on our way to Poona from Bombay, but is more expensive. The panorama of clouds frisking with the hills around us stretches all along the route from the height of 3000 to 7000 feet.

But we went to Darjeeling by a motor car. That route proceeds almost wholly side by side with the rail road which to put it better, is nothing but the old cart road reconstructed for the railway. The whole road has such serpentine windings that at some places we could see five or six rings of the road lower down which we had passed through.

At the height of 3000 ft. we come to Tindharia Station—a pretty little village. As our car had to stop at a railway crossing to wait for a train to pass, a Hindustani friend, dressed in Khadi from head to foot, mounted the foot-board of the car and laid Rs. 10 - at Gandhiji's feet. On inquiry it was found that he was a regular reader of Gandhiji's *Hindi Navajivan*, resident of the Ballia District and owner of a pretty little shop. Crowds of Bhutia ( the local hill community ) men and women used to meet us all along the road.

Then comes Kurseong Station at the height of 4500 ft. Thousands of men and women had completely blocked the road there. At that far away place the sight of Khadi anywhere among the crowd would only have surprised us. We reach Ghum Station when we negotiate 8000 ft. Then begins a descent of 1000 ft. to arrive at Darjeeling. If we go 1000 ft. higher up from there and if the day is clear, we can have the magnificent sight of the peak of Gourishankar.

Just as Simla is called so from Simladevi ( the name of a Goddess ), so Darjeeling derives its name from the temple of *Durjaya Linga*. (—Difficult to climb peak of Lord Shiva). The town is much smaller than Simla. The motor route ends near

the Darjeeling Station. One has then to take a *rikshaw* or ride a mule. These rikshaws are drawn by Bhutias or labourers. Their bodies are so trained to hardihood that no matter how torrential the rain and how dangerously slippery the path in consequence, it is a child's play for these people to go up or down with a load of 7-8 maunds. (1 maund-40 lbs). I saw one Bhutia carrying a cupboard 6 ft. in height and 3-4 ft. in breadth! We were glad to find that the labourers get fairly good wages.

We reached Darjeeling on 3.6. 1925 in the evening. Bengal was the first topic of the talk with Das Babu. He said, "I have nothing much to say against... (A). Only, he is conceited and self-opinionated. But... (B) is a scoundrel. He swallowed 14,000 rupees of the Tilak Swaraj Fund.... (C) is an impossible man to work with. I would prefer... (D) to him. It is the anarchists' and their secret methods that have made Bengal infested with so much animosity, intolerance, and distrust."

Speaking about his Guru<sup>1</sup> he said, "I had gone simply to meet him after my release from jail, but he stole my heart outright. He has transformed my outlook, behaviour and everything in me in many ways. It is his perfect silence that is the hallmark of his greatness. He gave me at that time a *mantra* to chant, but even then he kept up his silence. His mother uttered it on his behalf."

He had a long talk with Gandhiji regarding Mrs. Besant's Memorandum<sup>2</sup> also. As Das Babu had promised her a reply in 10 days and was at a loss to know how to frame a fitting

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1. During the last period of his life, Sri C. R. Das was a convert to Vaishnavism of the Radhaswami sect and wrote a very moving poem only a few days before his death which showed how eagerly he yearned to meet Lord Krishna after death.

2 Through a Memorandum signed by leaders of all political parties, Mrs. Annie Besant was then intent on securing all India support to her Home Rule Bill, which friendly M. P. s. were going to sponsor in the British Parliament. As usual, the British Government cold-shouldered the Bill and thus gave a fresh convincing reason for self-reliance to self-respecting Indians.



reply, he got Gandhiji to write it out for him. Gandhiji wrote down the draft in no time (probably on 4. 6. 1925):

@ "Dear Dr. Besant,

"I have your kind letter. I have shown your Memorandum to Mr. Gandhi who came here last evening and we have both come to the conclusion that whilst with certain necessary amendments your Draft Manifesto can be accepted by us personally, it has no chance of acceptance by Mr. Shastri (a Moderate), Mr. Jinnah (then a Muslim Nationalist), or Pandit Malaviyaji (a Hindu Nationalist), not to speak of others who have declared themselves uncompromisingly against civil disobedience. We feel that unless there is a clear understanding among all parties on the exact terms of our demand and upon the remedy we should adopt in the event of rejection, it would be futile to put forth anything as a National demand. The other difficulty in our way is want of a clear understanding between Hindus and Mussalmans and Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. We, therefore, feel that at the present moment we should concentrate our attention on privately cultivating the opinion of men whose voice counts in national affairs. This I am doing to the best of my ability.

"I have not wired to you any definite reply as I could not convey to you the above by wire. I am sorry I have not been able to send you anything encouraging.

Yours sincerely,  
C. R. Das."

Referring to this draft Mr. Das remarked to Mrs. Das :

@ "What would have taken me 3 days to write, he finished in 15 minutes ! And yet people refuse to regard him a politician ! But the man who could make this draft must be a consummate politician." When we were having our meal he reverted to it :

"Gujaratis are best cooks They know how to cook up things. Look at the morning's draft. I regard it as a concoction." "Did you not want him to write that ?" I put in. "O yes, I did;



but I have certain moral scruples to put my signature to it. He does not believe a word of what he has written!!!"

Mrs. Das had wired to Mr. Phookan ( President of the Assam Congress Committee ) requesting him to let Gandhiji stay with them ( Dases ) for 3 days more. Phookan's wire :

"When you ask and it is for Mahatmaji, who can refuse ? So I Agree."

Even after this wire Gandhiji wanted to keep the schedule, but Das would not hear of it.

Satishbabu was then telegraphed to come over to Darjeeling and the question of his stay discussed. "Would there not be a feeling of overcrowding ?" Gandhiji asked. "No," said Das, "and then I don't want him to feel that he was kept out. Even if there was overcrowding, I would have him stay here."

Gandhiji made the Khadi Pratishthan an official agent of the Congress by thus arranging a meeting between Das Babu and Satish Babu. On his leaving Darjeeling by a car in company with Satishbabu ( later on ) Gandhiji talked almost wholly of Dasbabu. Satishbabu said almost in a huff : "I am trying to forget them ( Swarajists ) altogether."

Gandhiji : "No. That's not the way. One should never look askance at anybody. Any thought or feeling that savours of suspicion should be thrown out of the mind. After our first meeting I was rather prejudiced against him. But my impression has grown ever more favourable, as I began to know him more and more. At the Punjab Committee,<sup>1</sup> he ( Das ) had no doubt about the correctness of the trap theory ( i. e. General Dyer deliberately gave short or no notice about the prohibition of the meeting in Jallianwala Bagh in order to trap the people and shoot them from a vantage point ). Jayakar ( both Das and Jayakar were members of the Inquiry Committee ) was even furious. But I refused pointblank to accept that theory. "The testimonies you provide are insufficient for me," I said. Das

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1. The Congress appointed an Inquiry Committee with Gandhiji as its President to inquire into the atrocities committed by General Dyer and other officials in the Punjab during the Rowlatt Act agitation in 1918.

immediately climbed down. "Well then, accept that evidence alone which satisfies you." He thus gave up his insistence at once. Then I met him in Calcutta and then now. The man who can cry like a child is sure to be a man of sterling worth. Freedom from suspicion has a thousand advantages. There was a time when I used to suspect my wife and under the grip of that suspicion there were many night quarrels and we used to spoil whole nights. Then there was a talk about my elder brother's wife, while the brother simply worshipped her. We were often tempted to disclose our suspicions to him, but our courage failed us everytime. At last we drove the doubt out of our minds. "Put your trust on the other man and you put him on his mettle." Satishbabu : "I shall have to cultivate that attitude then. I don't have it now."

Among his visitors, there were some Christian missionary sisters who invited Gandhiji to see the Bengali teaching school they had opened for missionaries. The school is high up on a hill, commands a charming view, and is conducted by Miss Roland's sister who is at home in Bengali. This was the first time we saw a school of this type. When Gandhiji went there, about a hundred or hundred and fifty Europeans, men and women, were present. Miss Roland delivered a charming little speech full of warmth and goodness, when she introduced and welcomed Gandhiji :

@ "Your visit here is a red letter day. A better understanding of India is only possible when we have meetings such as these. We welcome you as the Champion of the outcaste and depressed classes. Like Garibaldi you offer nothing but suffering. Such a man's religious soul bends to God, Who will vindicate the triumph of all that he prizes. Don't we feel ashamed of ourselves when we see we want to serve and yet have not suffered? We welcome you as a great servant, not only of India but of suffering humanity. Please tell us how to serve the Christ better."

Gandhiji was moved to his depths at this touching address



and then flowed from him for nearly three quarters of an hour a speech that kept everybody rapt away till the end.

@ "Miss Roland – and shall I say—brothers and sisters :

"I know you will excuse me for not standing up to speak, not for weak will but body. For years past it has been undermined and not able to stand the strain I should only much like it to bear.

"When I was invited to speak to you, I accepted the invitation gladly, even thankfully, as it would give me an opportunity to explain things which perhaps you might not have understood.

"The movement for which Deshbandhu Das, I, and many others stand today we have described as a movement of self-purification. I don't mean to conceal the fact that it has a political—a big political-side. But I have so often said, that, at those who make water-tight compartments and ask us to believe that there are certain compartments in our brains or rather hearts, some political, some religious, I laugh ! I pit my own experience against theirs, because I feel in all humility that my soul knows what they signify. Religious, political, and all activities are a beauty—a whole. Politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt. It has to be shunned. I would look askance at anyone who divorces politics from religion. Politicians concern themselves with the welfare of nations and the concern must be one of the concerns of a seeker after God. For me God and Truth are convertible terms. If He meant untruth or if He is a God of torture, I would decline to worship Him. Therefore, we have to establish the kingdom of God."

After this explicit statement regarding his own attitude, he turned to respond to the appeal made by Miss Roland :

@ "How can you, bearers of the message of Jesus, serve India ? It is almost asking me to carry coals to Newcastle. But there is some thing I might, in all humility, place before you, though I know I am not a Christian and some think me totally unfitted to speak to a Christian audience. As a humble, prayerful and sympathetic student of the Bible, I feel I can speak to



you things which come directly from the Sermon on the Mount. And if I have some candid Christian critics, I have numberless Christian friends who regard my activity with utmost sympathy and even approval. I am, therefore, emboldened to unburden my whole soul. I would be false to myself and you, if you did not allow me to tell you what I think.

"And I would ask you to detour a few years from the present to an address I delivered in 1916 before a ministry in Madras. There I said ministers perhaps erred in wanting a nominal conversion or a count of heads. I do not believe in proselytizing as understood today. I do not say it has done no good to humanity. But I venture to say that the good it has done is perhaps outweighed by the evil it has left behind.

"Conversion to a religion is like passing one's Entrance Examination, standing at the gateway to Heaven. Whether you accept one religion or another is of no consequence. All that God wants us to say is whether what we profess with our lips, we but believe in our hearts. There are thousands of men and women in India who do not know Jesus or his amazing sacrifice, but are far more God-fearing than many a Christian who knows the Bible and feels he follows the decalogue.

"Religion is made of a sterner stuff and it is impossible for us, frail weak human beings, to understand other human beings when they say they profess a different religion.

"I know numbers of those who profess Christianity and yet who know nothing of the message of love—of what the Cross stood for. Religion is not a matter of table-talk. Religion is the path of the brave. In my humble view a man is not 'converted' the moment he renounces his own faith and embraces another. I can quote a number of examples of Indians and Zulus who have turned Christians, but have not the faintest idea of the law of love or the sacrifice of Jesus or His message.

"Let me recall a conversation I had in Lubain Park, Johannesburg, with Mr. Murray of Regent's Chapel. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend in the hope that I will completely identify myself with Christianity. Mr. Murray and I walked,

he cross-examined me and at the end of the cross-examination he said, "I don't want to convert you, nor anyone." I prize it. He even accepted my interpretation of the message of Jesus. It is not he who says, 'Lord, Lord !' but he who accepts the will of God. I said to him, 'I am conscious of my weaknesses but try to fight them in His strength.' I was speaking energetically. Before this audience also Gandhiji was speaking in great spirit—and he was conscious of the fact. But he was doing so, intentionally, bearing in mind not only the Christians present there, but all other religious dogmatists who believed in conversion of the common type. He went on ) :

"I am speaking before you as forcefully as I did to him, as I want to touch your hearts as deeply as I wanted his. 'Do you want me to repeat parrot-like the Decalogue' I asked him. So I say instead of wanting to count so many heads, like Sir Gibby work away silently. Let your work be a silent testimony. What do you want to convert them for ? If your contact ennobles them and brings them a ray of light, is not that enough ? If you take a piece of bread to starving children is not that enough ? There is a war, there is rivalry, going on today about numbers of religious followers. I feel humiliated. I feel in every 'feat' ( of conversion ) we are denying God and are not true to ourselves.

"For one part of your work I have great admiration – this trying to learn the language of the people among whom you have cast your lot for service of humanity. It is good really that instead of wanting to serve India without learning their language, you have decided to learn Bengali. I would be untrue if I do not acknowledge the debt we owe to missionaries for service to vernacular languages and literatures – Gujarati, Marathi and Bengali. When we were oblivious, they opened out treasures. Who has served Tamil more than Pope ? Taylor had a passion for Gujarati. He gave me the love of my mother-tongue. He chaffed those who thought little of Gujarati. He said, "If you think nobly and bravely, your language will yield noble and brave expression." But there has been general disregard on the



part of many missionaries for the language of the part they serve. So it is good you have begun the study of Bengali.

"But in this you have touched by but a fringe. You will serve India best when you pick up the poorest of Indians and that only when you identify yourselves with them. Here I recall the words of Salisbury to missionaries who waited on him for protection against the Boxers<sup>1</sup> in China. He said he was surprised. 'You want to deliver the message of the Christ and have come to temporal power for protection? Not so the missionaries of old who gloried in the strength of the Christ.' He said, 'If you must go there, you must take all the risks God-fearing men must take. You may by asking us to protect you involve us in a war.' I don't know whether they went away satisfied. But they were the words of truth and wisdom. You must penetrate the masses with your lives in your hands.

"Here I recall an example of humiliation. I had gone to some place. I saw a crowd of skeleton people under the shadow of the so-called Lord of the Earth.<sup>2</sup> We are denying Him. It is we who harbour them under the shadow—within a 12 miles' radius of Jagannath. They were human beings not even in form. I will not speak of their clothes. I called them but there was no response. They couldn't talk, couldn't see. They had lustreless eyes. They could not eat even. They wanted some thing to be put into their mouths. They couldn't enjoy their food with any relish.

"And I saw side by side palaces rising in their insolence.

"Orissa is a land of chronic poverty. Some migrate and are living a life of shame and drink. Others I have described to you. They need to occupy themselves. That is why I have sought to tell you the message of India. I would not like to give them doles of rice. I have worked in a famine-stricken area. I could not give them doles, because I did not want them to go away from God. If I want them to work, I should work

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1. Members of a secret organisation formed to drive out foreigners and specially the missionaries who wanted to convert the Chinese.

2 Reference to Jagannathpuri—town of the Lord of the Earth, in Orissa.



with them. For years I must work on even without response. I wonder if you listen to me or (simply) hear me.

“I am reminded of the Calicut Mission House. It is their pride, but I say they are not going far enough. They don't serve women who have to sell their modesty. In the Ceded Districts<sup>1</sup> they (women) break stones. They are asked to do things which none of you would dare to face.

“The only way I could teach them to do work is to ask them to spin. The Viceroy laughed at me as a visionary. The Salvation Army puts porridge before them and then asks them to work for their food. They want their food first. So I say to you, if you want to serve India, you may do all your things and add this to them. Take this message to the villages of India. Many out of them are outside the railway lines.

“We suck their blood. We are bleeding India white,’ Salisbury said. ‘We make no return to them both in England and India.’ And we (middle classes of India) are your commercial agents; we take 5% and send 95% to you. Therefore, I say, ‘Work for them who are the noblest works of creation. They lag behind you in nothing.’

“It has been said, ‘Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.’<sup>2</sup> He was wrong. Let God forgive him. Man is not vile. He can be vile—when he is a slave of circumstances. I was a little bit of God-fearing to be able to fight those who called man vile.

“If you want to study man's problems, nothing will help you to understand and solve them but the spinning wheel. Is it too much if I ask you to wear the product of the spinning-wheel? India has all its cotton. If you can retain its cotton in its homes, nothing so good. Today the population of India has a six months' holiday. Even the Viceroy can't enjoy it. I talk of the drain from India. We could make up for it, if I could

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1. Districts ceded by the Nizam for favour of having in return the British Resident and British army in the state. They were stationed to bring the Nizam under the protecting umbrella of the British Empire.

2. From Bishop Heber's popular song given in the diary of 28-7-25.

make the nation work eight hours a day. Animals are better. They have better bodies, and there is lustre in their eyes. Orissa is worse.

"I have spoken from the depth of my heart. May it touch your heart."

Bapu sent an article on untouchability to Paul Kellogg for *Survey Graphic*. Referring to the 'invisibles' he wrote :

@ "Their very sight defiles. These outcastes of Hindu society are confined to what may be fitly described as ghettos."

Bapu sent the following letter to the monthly magazine *The world* as regards the future.

Darjeeling, 8. 6. 1925

@ "Dear friend,

"I have your letter with good wishes for which I thank you. In my opinion the speculation you ask me to indulge in is a vain speculation. Who knows what the whole present is ? But we all know that the future will be a direct result of the present. The one change needful is humility and introspection. In our arrogance we want to reform the world without reforming ourselves. 'Man ! Know thyself' is as true today as when it was uttered."

Who would or could expect the sight of Khadi and the spinning wheel in Darjeeling of all places ? But even that we had. There is one Mr. Priyababu who makes experiments for improvement in the spinning wheel. He has invented a foot-worked spinning wheel. He came to Gandhiji to show him both his new spinning wheel and the samples of silken, cotton, and woolen yarn he had spun on it. As in the whirligig (takli), in this spinning wheel also yarn is drawn out vertically. And it was standard too in quality. Gandhiji, therefore, arranged a spinning competition between this new wheel and the one in common use. There was one such wheel made by Khadi Pratishthan in Deshbandhu's house already. Priyababu claimed for his spinning wheel the capacity of 1000 yards an hour ! At the end of half an hour's competition, however, it appeared that



Priyababu's wheel did not have the rate of more than 300 yards. All the same Gandhiji strongly advised him to continue his efforts to improve his pattern.

We saw another spinning wheel also. It was plied by a doctor of Bombay and his wife, a Khoja Muslim couple. He has a lucrative practice in Bombay and has made it a rule to spend about 6 months in a retreat. He is a J. P. The Bombay University appoints him an examiner and the Government a member in their institutions. He is thus by no means a non-cooperator, but has wonderful faith in the spinning wheel. As he had bad slivers with him, he had written to a friend in Bombay to send him good ones. But the friend sent him mill-made instead of hand-made slivers. So he came to Gandhiji one day, complained against his slivers and requested him to provide the right kind of them. He then gave a respectable amount to Gandhiji for Khadi work and invited us to his house to get his own spinning wheel put in order. We had a pleasant sense of home-coming for a while, when we saw in that sojourn a spinning-wheel made in our Ashram at Sabarmati and had a good time, when we repaired the wheel. We introduced him to Satishbabu and advised him to send orders to the latter's Khadi Pratishthan for his spinning needs. So the doctor will now spend the remaining two or three months of his stay in Darjeeling very happily in his favourite pastime of spinning.

And what about Khadi? It seems Bengali women keep Khadi saris always in their trunks. Though there is no Khadi shop in Darjeeling we saw hundreds of Bengali women clad in Khadi in the streets. Most of the friends of Vasantidevi (Mrs. Das) and Urmiladevi (Das' sister) used to come in Khadi to the Dases' house. All the same hardly any of them may be a habitual Khadi-wearer. They were clad in Khadi simply as the befitting wear on Gandhiji's visit. He was requested to address a colourful public meeting of women attended by, among others, society ladies, queens, and many English women. Gandhiji spoke to them on his one favourite theme the spinning

wheel. Vyomeshchandra Banerji's<sup>1</sup> daughter, a medical practitioner and now Mrs. Blair, wife of an Englishman, is a regular Khadi-wearer. She gave Gandhiji a promise to start a spinning club. After this meeting Deshbandhu's house was invaded by many women eager to learn to spin. Five or six of them have even picked up the art fairly well. Modern towns are always full of autograph-hunters and Darjeeling, a peak of modernity in India, was certainly not behind. Many of them both men and women came to Gandhiji. One of them was an Armenian. Gandhiji demanded the usual price for his autograph, namely, the promise to wear Khadi. He took it even at that cost. A civilian's son came up with the same request. When he heard of Gandhiji's fee, he was taken aback for little while, but soon recovered, promised to wear Khadi and spin for half an hour and carried with him the coveted prize. One sister gave this promise even before Gandhiji asked for it. but another stopped short as she wanted time to think over before she took the pledge. The next day she returned fully resolved, gave the undertaking and requested Gandhiji to give her an autograph. He wrote the following in her book : "Don't be in a hurry to give a promise. Once given, keep it at the cost of life." During our descent from Darjeeling also, one boy came up to Gandhiji with the same common request. The moment Gandhiji asked him, "Will you wear Khadi and spin for half an hour?" the boy was non-plussed and faltered : "But, sir, the poet Rabindranath has given me his autograph !" "Oh, he is a great man; he may," was Gandhiji's quick return. The boy packed off immediately.

Crowds of Bhutias used to muster daily at Deshbandhu's house. Whoever could have carried the name of Gandhiji to their doors ! An old woman even knew enough of him to make

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1. One of the pioneers of the Indian National Congress and once its President. The national character of the Congress was evidenced ever since its beginning, because like some others Mr. Vyomeshchandra Banerji was a non-Hindu, a Christian, and still an ardent Congressman of his times.



her bring the takli for spinning her wool. But most of the groups came only out of blind reverence. The idea that induced most of them to come was, 'The Sahib Logs ( the respected Whites ) never come to see our Lama. Surely, this Lama must be very great. Even they come to him !' They would have to give some money to their Lama besides, when they go to him, but this Lama had the added qualification of not demanding anything !

There are plenty of tea gardens on the hills of Darjeeling. Mr. Scarp, the chief of the planters, gave a very pressing invitation to Gandhiji to see his garden, but as he would have to go for it twenty miles under the rains, he did not comply.

Three days were given to Darjeeling according to Gandhiji's schedule, but he stayed on for 2 days more at the insistence of Deshbandhu. Only 2 out of these 5 days were somewhat clear. There were short spans during those two days when we had the glorious glimpses of Kanchanjanga and the shining snow-capped peaks around. And the view looked as though the white lustrous minarets of the Taj Mahal were fixed between white and black clouds rolling around them. It was a clear day when we came down from Darjeeling. That gave us the chance to feast our eyes with the beautiful scenery that the whole mountain presented. At Tindharia Station that spirited youth of Balia District presented himself again, but now with his wife and a big crowd of men and women. He laid at Gandhiji's feet more than 25 rupees this time. Looking at Satishbabu, who was with us in the car, he inquired who he was. Immediately when he was told, he burst out, "I see ! The same I read of in the last issue of *Navajivan* ( Hindi ). Glad to know him." "So you read *Navajivan* also ! How many of you subscribe to it ?" asked Satishbabu. "Who else can there be in these parts ? But I call for 2 copies—one for my personal file and the other for readers in general." Before we left the station, he got from us the proper address for the remittance of his regular contribution for Khadi work.

In Silliguri also we came across another solitary friend working away with the same quiet faith and dogged zeal. He was a Behari. When we were going to Darjeeling, he had exacted from Gandhiji a promise to give him an hour on our return journey. He was simply mad with joy. He had pre-arranged two lovely meetings for Gandhiji. The framework of the house he was building was ready by then and he had fixed wooden boards in it for Gandhiji's halt. He had also kept ready with him a purse of rupees 450/- collected from his village. But there was still a third Gandhi-mad person whom we met at Silliguri itself. I was rather late in attending the meeting. I did not know that a White gentleman was sitting below the platform, near one of its ends. When the meeting ended he lustily raised the cry "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai" thrice and made the audience repeat it ! At first I summarily dismissed him as probably a cranky missionary out for cheap popularity. Later, however, I found he was an Irishman and a Station Master. He had seen Gandhiji 15-20 years ago in South Africa, but from a distance. He had never met him there, was a Gandhi-lover never the less, and had kept himself in touch with Gandhi-news even after his arrival in India. He sat with us in our compartment for a few stations. "What a world of difference between you of South Africa and today !" he ejaculated. "You have grown very humble now. In those days you cared a fig for anybody. Had a caustic tongue." And then he added, "But today you preach the turning of the left cheek. In those days you would give back a resounding two for one on your right !" Gandhiji laughed and asked, "So you took me for a man of that type then ? But did you mark anything like it in my action ? My faith in non-violence was as deep then as now." "I may be wrong," said the gentleman, "but your speeches were a terror and I speak only from them." "Then you have not heard me here. But I agree I may have grown humbler." "Yes, yes, that's it. You were fighting General Smuts in those days and he was your match." He thus recalled many memories of South Africa. We saw him the next



day again at the station in his charge handling a crowd of thousands by gentle appeals to keep order and lifting up babies to let them have Gandhiji's *darshan*. "You are progressing in non-violence, but I am still the same old Irishman!" he said as he bent down to touch Gandhiji's feet. And then, shaking hands with Gandhiji with such warmth as to shake the whole body, he left us.

Reached Jalpaiguri on 10-6-1925. Jogeshchandra's mother gave 101 guineas. At the public meeting there Gandhiji said :

"I thank you for your address I feel obliged at your dropping the ceremony of reading it and congratulate you on the action. I know that Jalpaiguri is a town of businessmen and you have shown your sound common sense in giving up the formality, as there was no need when you had sent me a printed copy already.

"After arrival here I find that though your town is small, you are conducting many institutions—a big school, a hospital etc. With high hopes for national service from you, I have come here. I have heard that there are many rich men here who carry on a roaring trade. I wish you greater prosperity but let me say at the same time that if your wealth, your intelligence, and business insight are not put to the use of the country, all those qualities have no value.

"I see that it is possible to receive great help from you in the fulfilment of the prayer which I address to every Indian and so in the achievement of the work I am at present doing for the country. I have stated elsewhere that if Indian businessmen support this work, we can immediately gain the peace and prosperity we want in India. The educated classes have served India for many years past. It is now the turn of our businessmen and masses. The work that is being done in India is called the constructive programme and it is very necessary for its success that practical-minded people should take it up.

"We send 60 crores ( 600 millions ) of rupees every year to foreign countries. The fact discloses lack of business acumen and imagination. If business-men employ both these talents in

national service to the same extent they do in their professions, boycott of foreign cloth and production of Khadi would immediately become a goal as good as gained. For that purpose everywhere in my tour all over India I have been calling on people to spin and wear Khadi.

"There are seven hundred thousand villages in India. I regard every village an indigenous mill. In every one of them there is a spinning and weaving mill and men to work it. We are already producing sufficient cotton for all those mills. We have thus all the three essential requisites with us—machinery, men and materials. I ask you, therefore, to pause and consider. If a businessman from a foreign country visited our land and came to know that though we had all these three necessary means, we were sending away our cotton abroad and wearing clothes made from our own cotton by foreign countries, how would he rate us? Will you not admit that he will take us for either fools or traitors? I know we are neither, but I know also that it is all the result of our misfortune and ignorance. Under the strain of many schemes and undertaking taken up all at once there has been a brain fag and we can't understand the simple thing that it is a child's play for us to produce the cloth sufficient for our needs. Dazzled by the prosperity and luxury of the West and bewildered by the quarrels of theoreticians and economists, we have lost our bearings and cannot see what is clear as daylight. We have, therefore, been reduced to such a sad plight that when I point out this easy simple thing to do, people stand aghast and exclaim, 'O, that is impossible.'"

"But I have the faith that within a very short time we shall understand why we were not able to grasp this simple idea all this long while. When I tell you, 'It is your *dharma*—whether you are a Hindu, a Muslim, or anyone else—to discard foreign cloth and get your hand-spun yarn woven by your local weaver, do I impose upon you any difficult task? You may grumble that Khadi is very thick and coarse. I tell you in reply, 'As you put up with the climate of India so should you bear with Khadi made in India.' And let me go further and say, 'If Khadi is



thick, it is we - you and I—who are to blame.' When Khadi alone becomes the universal wear, you will be able to produce the Khadi of your choice. On the strength of four years' experience, I say we are producing much better Khadi than we did at the start.

"Another complaint made to me is that Khadi is dearer than Japanese or Manchester cloth. Even there the fault is ours. Protection is necessary for every new industrial enterprise. When Germans began to produce sugar from beet roots, the German Government spent millions of rupees to protect that nascent industry. And that is the history of every new venture. You will then say, 'That means we must have the help of the Government for such undertakings.' But I say, 'Doesn't matter if no Government help is available. Is it necessary to tell businessmen like you that you can give the necessary impetus to such activities with the aid of your money? If you do that much, it is enough and more. Then let the Government do nothing.'

"And let me point out another fact. Within only four years the price of Khadi has fallen considerably as a result of the study and effort of Khadi-lovers.

"I appeal to you to help Khadi in a third way. Those who do not want to give any monetary aid may render it service of another kind—I mean the sacrifice of half an hour's labour by you the higher classes. Spin for half an hour and give to India the yarn you produce. If you do that, we shall be able to sell Khadi at half the present price.

"But as it will take time for the whole country to start spinning, I beg of you to give me all the three kinds of help. And let me repeat them :

- (1) Every individual may give some money to make Khadi cheaper;
- (2) A self-less and intelligent man may try to understand the economics of Khadi and the mechanics of the spinning wheel and help that way; and

(3) Everybody may dedicate to the land half-an-hour's labour of spinning.

"I hope, you, the residents of Jalpaiguri, men of understanding and wisdom that you are, will do these things and help this work. If you can't give your help in all ways, do it in any you can. I don't say you must do this work at any sacrifice of your business or profession. All I say is we should not let our spare time go waste, but put it to good use by turning the spinning wheel.

"As a part of our effort to purify ourselves, let us pray that the hearts of Hindus and Mussalmans become clear of ill-feeling.

"We may also pray to God that He may destroy the disease of untouchability. I have read and pondered over the tenets of the Hindu dharma. And after putting those precepts into practice to the best of my ability, I assert that there is no place for untouchability in the Hindu scriptures.

"During my wanderings in these parts I have been told that the people here are ridden with the drink habit and prostitution is on the increase also. I had a talk with the doctors in Darjeeling on this matter. When I think of it, I feel so distressed that in this land of Bharat, this holy land, an evil such as this should have grown so rampant ! Let us throw out this dirt, cast it off, as we would a snake or a scorpion. Let us shun this soul-destroying thing.

"I pray to God that He may grant you the power to understand the simple little things I have spoken of.

"You have given this oblation of 7000 rupees for the Cause. I thank you for the purse and feel obliged. Need I say that the amount will be spent solely after the propagation of Khadi and the Charkha ?"

Reply to the welcome address of the District Local Board :

"I thank you for your address. Your remarks on my activity are true. It is the *dharma* of every individual, who ever calls himself an Indian, to remove the stark poverty of India. It is



besides the universally acknowledged *dharma* of all who live in India to live amicably. Even institutions that serve the public, whether they be Local Boards or Municipalities or the like, have those two duties in common with every Indian citizen. You may keep the streets clean, you may impart education, but, if our hearts are not clean and if those who walk on the streets have not sufficient food to eat, what is the good of having clean streets and education? That is why I say, "We cannot have the kind of Government we want so long as everyone, from the Viceroy down to his door-keeper, does not take up the spinning wheel. This talk of the Viceroy taking to the wheel may have provoked a smile, but even the Viceroy is certain to do that work, I say, if only we all take it up in right earnest. The Muslim's recitation of the *Kalma* or the Hindu's of his *Gayatri* are of no use, so long as we have not released the poor from the clutches of poverty. I know how wretched the condition of the Muslims of Bengal is. That is exactly what prompts me to say that if you wear the Khadi made here, all the money you spend goes to the spinners and weavers who are your own men. With the greatest deference let me say that spinning is our very *dharma*. It is necessary to spin even for saving the untouchable whom we despise. In short, I request you to act up to the things you have admired in me in your address and thus lend a helping hand to this work."

To the volunteers he said :

@ "You say there is no fun in spinning. Is there any fun in reciting *Gayatri*? Is there any fun in reciting the *Kalma*? You do it as it is a duty, as it is a sacrament. India is dying. Have you ever watched the feet of a dying man? You will find them cold and benumbed, whilst you feel some warmth in the brain. You feel there is life yet left, but it is fast ebbing away. Even so the masses of India are the feet. They are benumbed and lifeless. If you want to save India from impending ruin, you do this little sacrifice or perish."

Nawabganj. Arrival, 11-6-1925

There was a public meeting and an exhibition in connection with it. There were *dhoties* made from beautiful yarn spun by children.

The following facts about the town were given : The Charkha was introduced in 1921. Khadi worth rupees 1769 was produced upto May 1925, and the latest figure of production was Rs. 1968 and of sale Rs. 2217, out of which Khadi worth Rs. 1700 was sold on the occasion of Gandhiji's visit itself. There are 28 spinning members of the Congress, 19 of whom even weave the yarn they spun. 80 out of the 170 students similarly spin and weave the Khadi they wear. There are 5 churches and 10,000 Christians in the town. The amount collected is Rs. 6,385, the population of the centre is 1,10,000.

Arrived Narayanganj by a steam-launch, *en route* to Japsi, on 12-6-1925.

Wrote a letter to ( Deshbandhu ) Das :

@ "My dear friend,

"I had very happy days with you. I feel that we have come nearer each other for the communion at Darjeeling.

"Had a purse of only Rs. 7000 at Jalpaiguri. This I have handed to Satishbabu with instructions to transfer it to the Charkha Committee you are appointing. At Jalpaiguri too I had the same experience as elsewhere. Spinners are there, but nobody to organise them. There is a good girls' school here. They have about 20 wheels, not one of which is passable. The poor school mistress, though she spins fine, does not know a good charkha from a bad. The Committee is unconcerned as to the condition of the charkhas. This can be easily remedied if there was expert guidance. The proposed Committee will supply that guidance.

"I do want you to learn spinning both at the wheel and the rakli. You can do it if you will but put your mind to it. If the Governor said, 'Spin and take what you want', you will work at the wheel for twentyfour hours and master it. Well, it is not the Governor who is saying it, but one who loves you and loves



India does say, 'Spin and take Swaraj.' Oh, that we could do one thing of permanent value ! To clothe ourselves through the wheel is not an impossible programme. The spinner whom Satishbabu promised will be with you as soon as we reach Calcutta. Do learn the thing and spin religiously for half an hour for the sake of the millions and in the name of God. It will give you peace and happiness. And then when you are doing it, the young men over whom you exercise such wonderful control will also take it up.

"I hope fever will not worry you again.

"A letter is going to Bhombal ( pet name of Das' son ) by the same mail that will take this to you. We reach Calcutta by the 18th. We are at Barisal between 14-16.

"Please tell Basantidevi to send her first gooda ( hank ) of yarn to me. I want thirty days' collection made into strands of 100 yards each nicely and neatly. Nothing but first class work will be accepted from the Mayoress of Calcutta."

In reply to a letter of Raja Mahendra Pratap ( a revolutionary and big landlord in exile ) from California :

@ "I continue to hear from you from time to time. I know that we differ in our outlook upon life. I know there are as many minds as there are men. But as cold and heat cannot co-exist in the same place at the same time and in the same circumstances, so can violence not co-exist with non-violence at the same time and place and in the same circumstances."

Letter to Manibehn ( daughter of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ) :

"Serve Father with heart and soul. Let me give you both ( Manibehn and her brother ) the essence of my experience as my father's obedient son. When Mother dies and Father is loaded with heavy responsibilities and worries, the children, if they are of a serviceable nature, succeed in making the father forget all his troubles And I can testify from personal experience how great is the benefit that accrues to the children from the filial service. Every moment of my life I am still enjoying the fruit of worshipping my parents as veritable forms of God.

I write all this to both of you, because I know what heavy responsibility Father is loaded with. I cannot share the burden at all, don't spare even the time to write to him. Therefore, I rest upon yourselves my responsibility in the matter also.'

A French lady Madame Antoinette Mirbel wrote a letter which said in substance : 'I was in search of a Guru. I have found him and now I want to see you. My lower self wants to take in your presence three vows before the higher. You will please give me permission to see you. I am an engineer's wife and cannot afford to make the journey unless I receive the permission.'

Gandhiji's reply :

@ "Dear friend,

"I was delighted to receive your letter. But I must not encourage you to undertake what is a long and expensive journey for the purpose of seeing me. Nor is it necessary for you to see me for your spiritual progress. It comes through service rendered in the name of God."

Madaripur,  
13-6-1925

Gandhiji wrote a long report in the Visitor's Book of the school at Boozari where spinning is compulsory, though it is a Government school.

He visited a religious institution, where he passed severe strictures on its pretence of observing *brahmacharya* :

③ "Why deceive people, when you do not observe even physical continence ? Do not cash your *brahmcharya*. Cash your talent if you like, not your purity."

There was a large gathering of women at Madaripur. All the spinners among them were fallen sisters. Referring to them Gandhiji said :

"It is men who contrive to bring about the fall of women. I don't think there is any religion which gives men the right to do so. It is dangerous to make use of prostitutes in public work, so long as they continue in their profession. I, therefore,



advise public workers to entrust that work to their wives and provide some new occupation to the fallen sisters.

"In the address given by the Shantisena (army of peace) the volunteers wanted to know what they should do to advance their work. I find that they have taken the vow of *ahimsa* (non-violence). *Ahimsa* is nothing but love. Let me suggest a royal road for their progress and that is to take up the work of the protection of women. They should convince the males of Madaripur that it is a crime against Khuda (God), it is beastliness, to commit adultery. I would also like to ask the Shantisena to form, if possible, a women's Shantisena that may serve fallen women and find out occupation for them.

"You tell me that Madaripur has been assigned by the Government the first place in revolutionary activities and that it pioneered the spirit of self-sacrifice in the country. I wish you brought about the revolution, so necessary in society, for the rescue of fallen women and thus gave a start to a nationwide activity of that nature.

"During my present tour somebody told me two or three days ago, that a visit to a brothel is considered in these parts not a matter of shame and dishonour but one of manliness. This, I say, is a serious mistake. It is anything but manliness to have intercourse with the fallen woman. Through the men of Madaripur, I wish to say to all men that only he has the grit to win Swaraj, who can protect the honour of women. I believe there are selfless men in Madaripur. I hope you will listen to my advice, close the institution you have established for employing fallen women in public service, and show to the world there is not a single male here who ruins a woman's character. If you do so, you will be honoured as the vanguards of fighters for Swaraj.

"We want political power. I shall be glad if the Governor of this province hails from this part. But I wish, we realized our responsibilities at the same time. You cannot win your rights without knowing and doing your duties properly. We will win Swaraj only by our own power and right. That is why

I talk of the charkha everywhere and with faith as indubitable as the fact that I see you all. I affirm that we shall be able to arm Deshbandhu with even greater power through the wheel than through a seat we provide him in the Legislative Council. All of us cannot go to the councils, but we can certainly give the fullest help to those who go there. But that we can give only when we do something ourselves in the service of the poor people of India. Till now we have dabbled in many pursuits and achieved nothing. Instead of having many irons in the fire, let us now concentrate on one activity, which everyone big and small can do.

“Parallel in importance is the work of Hindu-Muslim affinity. Two inducements have brought me here at Madaripur—one, Suren Pratap’s love and the other, the fact that there is a large population of Namashudra brothers here. It had been suggested that I should visit Gopalganj also. But since I could not go there, I wanted to have the satisfaction of meeting the Namashudras by a visit to this place. I freely take service and help from Namashudras and am turning myself into one of them, because so long as any man in India regards some other person as a Namashudra, as a depraved creature, there is no Swaraj for him. That is not religion but irreligion which teaches contempt for any individual. If I am convinced beyond doubt that untouchability is a veritable and indivisible limb of Hindusim, I would renounce it. It is, therefore, my humble but earnest appeal to all to shun those to whom Namashudras are an abhorrence.

“May God give you the strength to do the simple things I have put before you. When we are able to carry out that programme very successfully, India will acquire a power which nobody can resist.”

Barisal,  
15-6-1925

A reference has already been made to that very up-to-date sister whom we met at Faridpur. As she is an Inspectress of



Government Schools, she met Gandhiji here also. But here she had brought with her that same takli as well as her standard quality yarn spun on it. She was persuading other sisters also to spin. Proudly showing Gandhiji her skill in spinning and her knowledge of even carding, she said, "I have decided to introduce this (takli) in the girls' school. By way of a start I think of ordering 60 taklis." "Good. That's fine," remarked Gandhiji, "and now begin wearing Khadi." "You are so insatiable!", she commented in disarming candour; "but, unlike you, I am not a woman of simple habits. I must have everything fine around me, though I am not sufficiently well-off. If you can provide me a fine Khadi sari for 20 rupees, I shall use it."

The yarn present here came to 18 lakhs (hundred thousand) of yards, which included 4 lakhs from women. An old man gave 35 thousand yards, while a child spun 14 thousand in 15 days. There are 50 Mussalman spinners in Hasenabad, we were told.

Gandhiji's address before the public meeting :

"I thank you for your address, yarn, towel etc. I feel sorely distressed that I could not see Ashwini Babu in his house. I cannot fail to remember today the talk I had with him and his family. He was an extraordinary personality. I know you have begun to collect a fund to honour his memory but am sorry to learn that the collection has not hit the mark yet. It is but our duty to remember the name of Ashwini Babu. The memorial fund for that great man, who spent his life here and founded so many public institutions, should be taken up energetically and completed in no time.

"I miss the presence of the Ali Brothers here with me.

"I am glad that you gave me a report of your work. We have still much work ahead. If we implement the programme fixed at Belgaum (Congress) well enough, we shall acquire an irresistible power.

"My soul cannot feel at peace so long as everyone of us, Hindus and Muslims, men, women and children, doesn't spin for half an hour and renounce foreign cloth. And I wish, none of

you will rest till you succeed in completing this simple little work. The farmer has no work to do for four months in a year. I find everywhere that the condition of our peasants is very pitiable. Malaria is endemic in their hutments and the chief reason is their poverty. That makes me pray, to every man and woman I meet in my rambles all over India to spin for half an hour for the sake of God and our poor brothers and sisters.

"I saw numerous women plying the wheel. It was a really delightful sight, but with my experienced eye I could see that as their wheels were not in good working order, produced a jarring sound and bad yarn. You cannot feel happy with such a wheel. If the wheel is all right, the sound is so melodious that one does not like to give up spinning. I hope those among you who are lovers of the charkha will grow so adept in repairing them, that they will create a sweet note.

"It was painful to learn that half-Khadi is sold here seven times as much as pure Khadi. Mixed Khadi does us no good. I say so from experience. If mixed Khadi continues to be patronised, it will make the much-needed improvement in the yarn of the spinning wheel impossible. You cannot carry the message of pure Khadi to villages, so long as you do not give up your craze for mixed Khadi. Therefore, I respectfully entreat you to give up mixed Khadi just as you have discarded mill cloth.

"And let me congratulate you for the Hindu Muslim amity that prevails here.

"I have spoken on the destruction of untouchability at numerous places and I do not say anything more here.

"I congratulate you for the reform of fallen sisters. I wish you will not rest, till there remains a single such sister in Barisal."

Gandhiji conferred with both the Swarajists and the No-changers of Barisal about their local disputes and then wrote the following letter to Sharat Babu the leader of the No changers.

@ "I am so glad, you at once understood that another meeting could only be treated as a counter demonstration. Non-



violence is love. It works silently, almost secretly. Hence, the saying the left hand knoweth not what the right is giving. Love has no play as between friends and relatives. These love one another from selfishness, not enlightenment. It has play only between opponents so called. It demands, therefore, the highest charity and all the chivalry one is capable of showing towards those who oppose or persecute one.

"In the light of the above please consider and answer the following charges they brought against you yesterday after you had left.

(Here follow charges about hindering even constructive work, villifying Congress members, collecting yarn without authority, refusal to deliver Congress furniture etc.)

"I find it impossible to believe any of the charges. You need not answer them now. You may do so when I call on you. But if you would give a categorical answer in writing, you may do so."

During the talk last night with the teachers of the national school here, a teacher argued that if they began to draw regular salaries, they would cease to be 'national'. Gandhiji's reply :

@ "Don't you abuse the noble word 'sacrifice' by using it in any and every connection. We do no sacrifice whatsoever. It is better to draw your allowance than to let the people understand you are doing some big sacrifice. A teacher is no less a national teacher because he draws a salary. The school may be national and the teacher who is drawing a salary of 500 rupees per month may not be national, but he is not, therefore, debarred from serving in the school, which, because he is serving in it, does not cease to be national. If it had not been for a definite purpose, I would not wear this *langot* (loin-cloth), giving me, as it does, a false sanctity. I know that without it I cannot appeal to the masses, and that is why I allow myself to be played with as a saint and sanctified individual, and because I know my own weakness so very well, I am not likely to be led astray by these false estimates."

When the question of the affiliation of the Nawabganj school was touched, Gandhiji remarked :

@“Whynot give your own certificates instead of the University’s which is no longer an influential body ? What happened in the days of old ? A *brahmachari* went and said he belonged to *Bharadwaj Ashram* and that was sufficient credential for him. In the same way you make such a name that your boys go out of your school with a special hall-mark.”

There was a letter from Pandit Motilal Nehru from Delhousie intimating a fresh attack of asthma and Jawaharlal’s sickness with fever. But the chief reason for writing it was Panditji’s impression that Gandhiji had advised Khwaja not to go to the Council of State. The letter said in effect : Khwaja is a Swarajist and a Swarajist’s service of Jamia (Aligarh National University) should not be made a reason for dissuading him from going to the Council. While, on the one hand, Jamia had grown into a hot-bed of intolerance, on the other, they (Swarajists) felt that there was no person who could kick out Raza Ali except Khwaja. And Panditji wondered why after his promise to the Swarajists to help them, Gandhiji gave such a contrary advice to Khwaja and why Gandhiji was supporting the (communalist) Jamia leaders.

The letter clearly betrayed hasty judgment. Gandhiji wrote in reply :

@“I was distressed to learn from your letter of your relapse and Jawahar’s fever. I hope both of you were free soon after your letter and that you are both now enjoying the bracy atmosphere.

“I have wired to you about Khwaja. He is wrong in saddling me with responsibility. But if he must, what can I say but what I should do in his place ? If the Jamia breeds intolerance, it is Khwaja’s fault. He is its head. It was started by the best of the Mussalmans. It may be reformed if it has become bad, but in my opinion it should not be allowed to die for want of care. It must, therefore, claim Khwaja’s undivided attention, if it is to prosper. He is not a mere figure-head, but



he is the soul of the movement. He is also an administrator. I am, therefore, objecting not on the ground of principle but policy, that is in the present case more important, if possible, than principle. The only way Khwaja can seek election is by finding a substitute equally efficient for the College.

"Moreover, I am not the only person to advise. Khwaja has to consult Hakim Saheb and Dr. Ansari, if he will not also consult the Ali Brothers. They are co-trustees with him. I hope you now appreciate my difficulty. I feel that I am helping the (Swaraj) party with all my heart. I want to help it, more for my own satisfaction than for that of friends, much as I prize their satisfaction.

"You may show this to Khwaja, if it will help him to come to an independent decision.

"I hope you received my letter in reply to your first letter."

In a talk with the Namashudras Gandhiji said :

"You have told your tale in such simple and sweet Bengali that I could catch all you wanted to say. The whole of India suffers from the plight which you describe as yours. Illiteracy is not confined to Namashudras only. It prevails among Mussalmans as well as other communities. The movement for the removal of untouchability that is carried on today has no other object than of bringing untouchables into the pale of touchables. It includes, of course, provision of the services of dhobies, barbars etc. which are denied to you owing to untouchability. If I put it in other words it means the eradication of the fifth class that has come to exist over and above the four classes according to Varnashrama. The programme for the removal of untouchability, therefore, does not include removal of those other ills which you suffer in common with others and for which also you demand redress. But I have put the charkha in front of the whole of India for the removal of the other woes against which you complain. And let me warn the Namashudra farmers that if they do not adopt the spinning wheel, nobody will be able to uplift them. You want redress from the zamindar's persecution. But he oppresses everybody, not you only.

And he does so, because the victims have no supplementary profession to fall back upon and cannot defend themselves. If, therefore, all of us take up the spinning wheel, there is no power in India which can thwart us from protecting ourselves. Attempts are being made to remove illiteracy in general and you also will gain from them. I will not say anything more just at present. God bless you."

Reply to the District Local Board's address :

"I thank you for the address. You have stated that I am really sincere in my expressions for heart-unity between Hindus and Muslims. I can only say, 'Khuda ( Muslims were in an overwhelming majority in East Bengal even in 1925 ) is my witness, when I confirm that you are right in your judgment.' For the last 40 years, it has been a settled conviction with me that there can be no peace and happiness for India till Hindus and Mussalmans live in harmony. You have by that statement given me the chance to tell you that over and above education of children and maintenance of clean roads, this ( unity ) too is your work. What does Hindu-Muslim unity mean ? Enmity between the two ? I have no enemy. My business is simply to serve India, to make her a free country. In making India free I make the world free. I don't think it necessary to kill or harm anybody in order to make this land free. That is why I have been saying that if Mussalmans are true to their faith and Hindus chant the Gayatri mantra in the right spirit, both will understand that it is nothing but their religious duty to be united at heart. Unless that is done, this mutual distrust will not disappear. As we do not wish to be anybody's enemies, the world will become friendly with us. I, therefore, say to every institution, District Local Board or Municipality or any other, "Promote the spirit of unity." I am not afraid of accepting an address from any quarter, because there is no secrecy about my work, it is open as daylight, and because my work is yours also.

"I have put the charkha before India and have never allowed my mind to stray from it.



"If the zamindar, Chaudhari, wants to serve the poor, he must serve Khadi. Remember that it is Khadi which will put 4 pice (—1 anna i. e. 1/16 of a rupee) in a widow's pocket. I say even to Government officers that if they wanted to pay back their debt to India, they ought to ply the wheel."

There was a meeting of the submerged classes—shoemakers, tanners, scavengers and such others. This was the dialogue with them :

Gandhiji : "Do you drink ?"

Answer : "Yes."

G : "Can you not give it up ?"

A : "We may, if some Mahatma turns up and asks us to do so."

G : "Wherever I go, I say that I am a friend of shoemakers, tanners, washermen, barbers — of everybody in fact. But how can I become your friend ? You refuse even to wear Khadi. If you find it too dear, wear a short dhoti like this one. It is for you that I use this small piece. What is the price of the dhoti you are wearing ?"

A : "18 annas."

G : "Oh, then I can give you one like mine in 9 annas. We may even do with a mere strip of cloth. And if we do so, Khadi ceases to be dear."

A : "Yes, yes. We'll wear Khadi."

G : "Then I shall tell everybody, 'Do you want to see my friends ? Go to Barisal. The people wear Khadi, abstain from drink, and not only work the spinning wheel themselves, but even make children do it' But you will not play me false ? Suppose that boy over there says he wants a soft and fine piece of cloth ?

The boy : "No, sir. We will wear Khadi."

Somebody : "The Babus (higher-class men) have given up wearing shoes. How will our profession go on after this talk of *swadeshi* ? How shall we earn our daily bread ?"

A voice : "We'll weave Khadi."

Another : "No. But why should we give up shoe-making ? Nobody can make everyone give up shoes."

Addressing the Tarun Sangha (a youth association) Gandhiji said :

"I thank you for your address and the yarn you gave me. I thank those prisoners also who have sent me their yarn from jail. When you write to them, please tell them to spend all their available time in spinning. He who goes to jail in spite of his innocence serves the country more than those who remain outside. The latter may even get angry, quarrel, and fight. That has been my experience since I came to Barisal. We only harm India thereby. But the prisoner in jail cannot do any harm. If I have to choose between yarn and character, I would prefer character. Even if a prostitute gave me thousands of yards of yarn, I should not be happy, I take your word and assume that the particular friend is innocent. But if he is guilty, he must spin by way of penance. In that case, it is not for service of his country that he has gone to those places. But if he is innocent, he is rendering excellent service.

"It is upon the youth that the service of the country depends. I would expect young men to undergo hardships cheerfully. If young men ask me to burn the charkha, I cannot bear the thought of it. I cherish the highest hopes from the young and my blessings go with them."

Gandhiji had met some fallen sisters in Barisal in 1921 and advised one or two workers to take up the work of their uplift. Later on there was a split between Congress workers and quarrels arose between No-changers and Swarajists. Nowhere else did those quarrels take such a hideous turn as at Barisal. These same fallen sisters, for whose uplift workers had pledged themselves, were made pawns in the political game. They became Congress members—nobody can deny their right to become Congress members—but they became even Delegates and swayed the Congress as their votes were courted for party ascendancy ! On the day Gandhiji reached Barisal, these sisters requested him to visit them in their quarter and accept their



welcome address. A gentleman, moreover, strongly supported them.

Gandhiji controlled his anger at first and said, "Tell them, if they want to see me they may come here. I can't go to meet them."

But the gentleman did not catch the purport of Gandhiji's remark. He began to plead on their behalf: "You yourself once appealed to us to serve these unfortunate sisters and now you deprive them of even your *darshan* ! They wish, moreover, to give you an address."

Gandhiji could no longer put up with *this*. "If my advice were to be misconstrued so woefully, I had better drown myself. I had asked you to serve them, but they haven't given up their profession. And to make use of them in politics, while they still at it ! Suppose any of them spins ; what then ? That yarn means nothing to me. Should the spinning wheel be made a cover to hide sin ? And you want me to accept their address and officially recognize their profession ! The very idea ought to make one feel ashamed. The first step in service to them is to make them renounce their profession altogether. Any other service is impossible, so long as they stick to it. And they shrink from coming to me ? Did they in 1921 ? What they really want by giving me an address is to acquire status and power. That will never do."

This reminds me that the question of courtezans came up twice formerly. A women's meeting was held for the collection of the Tilak Swaraj Fund in a temple courtyard in Belgaum. Two such women slipped into the temple and throwing fifty rupees in the bag went away immediately. Only a short time earlier a friend in Bombay had told Gandhiji that a big donation could be secured from a reputed prostitute-singer. Gandhiji refused outright to accept her money. He said "Acceptance would mean appreciation of her occupation. Let her first give it up and then she may give lakhs of rupees as a penance." At Belgaum also the question was discussed whether he should accept those 50 rupees. But there Gandhiji said :

"Those sisters have given the amount not with exultation, but tears of repentance. There is nothing wrong in accepting it. The fact that they did not even dare to be present at the meeting, showed that they were not proud of their profession."

As much as an hour was spent in discussions about the local quarrels, before we departed from Barisal.

Read from Ashwini Babu's collection an excellent book, 'Life of Tolstoy,' by Paul Birnkoff (Cassel & Co.).

@ "God said to man: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread,' and to woman, 'In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.'

Woman has been following God's commandment, only man has failed. He steals unwarranted riches and luxuries and then cheats himself by claiming to be charitable.

@ "The commandment of love came later and men try to shield themselves under it. Unless the commandment of work is fulfilled, that of love cannot be carried out, and all preaching of love without labour appears hypocrisy."

This book taught me the real meaning of the pregnant motto: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay', which appears on the first page of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. God says, "Revenge is my business. Who are you, pummy little creature, to think of it? You are not to punish anybody." Tolstoy portrays this idea in the picture of Anna's illness, when her enemies gather around her sick-bed.

His daughter requested Tolstoy to let her dramatise a short story he had written and enact it :

@ "Tolstoy took great interest in the book, but he felt depressed by the extravagance and futility accompanying the performances. 'I am ashamed of all these expenses in the midst of poverty,' he said."

His work *Ressurrection* was written specially with reference to the Dukhobors. They made a pile of all their arms, poured kerosene oil on it and burnt it.

Till his age of 75 to 80, he used to translate valuable books



and only a few days before his death he compiled from great authors their best and happiest expressions.

The Russian Church excommunicated him, when he was near the end of his life. "No existing power can excommunicate me from truth," was his comment.

When he wrote an exceptionally charming piece in any work, he would say, "I have left a bit of my life in my inkpot."

Khulna  
17-6-1925

At 4 a. m. and right on the steamer the news of the demise of Deshbandhu had to be broken to Gandhiji. Dr. ( P. C. ) Roy was telegraphically informed and he came to Gandhiji with the wire. Immediately on his arrival in Khulna Gandhiji sent wires to Vasantidevi ( Mrs. Das ), Pandit Motilal Nehru, Urmila Devi ( Das' sister ) Mona ( eldest daughter ), Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali and Mr. Phookan ( President, Assam Provincial Congress Committee ) and cancelling his tour decided to leave for Calcutta in the afternoon.

At the public meeting Gandhiji was given a purse of Rs. 2000 and addresses from the Municipality and the District Local Board. He replied :

"I thank you for your addresses and the purse. You have heard from our worthy president what calamity has fallen upon us. I know, if we are true sons of India, we shall refuse to be paralysed with any grief whatever. Two conflicting duties confronted me this morning. It was my duty to catch the first train for Calcutta, when I heard this news. And there was this other duty also - of completing the programme already fixed. For the sake of service only, I chose this second course. But, instead of my usual subjects, I wish to speak about some recollections of Deshbandhu. And I know his soul also approves of my choice of being here in preference to going to Calcutta by the first train.

"Deshbandhu was a great man of India ( Gandhiji's eyes were bedewed with tears ). It is now six years since I came in

his contact. I came to know him first in 1919. And when I returned from Darjeeling this time I remarked to a friend, "My love for him grows deeper with every contact." During my stay with him in Darjeeling I saw that his heart had no room for anything except India's good. This is not a courteous expression, but I speak from my heart. Free India was his beau ideal. And I want to attest here that, till the last moment in his talk with me, what possessed his mind was his desire to unite all the parties in Bengal and give the greatest possible help to the cause of India's freedom. Even from those who did not see eye to eye with him in all matters,—were his critics in fact—I heard that there was no man who could fill up the gap he had left. They admitted : 'We can criticise him; it's easy; but we can't replace him.'

"Deshbandhu knew no fear and his love for the youths of Bengal had no limit. Those young men who came in my contact during my recent tour in these parts told me, 'There never was an occasion in all our experience, when we stretched our hand to him for something and he denied it to us.' Deshbandhu earned lakhs and gave away lakhs to the young men of Bengal. His was a sacrifice of the first magnitude. And who am I to speak of his intelligence and acumen ?

"I want to reveal to you another fact. Not once but many times he told me that the gateway of India's freedom rested on two pillars, peace ( non-violence ) and truth. And let the Hindus and Mussalmans of India take it from me that he never differentiated between them. To Englishmen also who live in India I wish to give the assurance that there was no enmity for them in Deshbandhu's heart. He had set his heart on one single thought : "Whether I live or die, I do so for India's Swaraj." What shall we do to honour such a great son—such a great servant of India ?

"It is so easy to shed tears. But tears can do no good to his soul, to me, or to his family. So let everyone of us—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, everyone who resides in India—make the grim resolve to accomplish the work on which he had fixed his



heart. We are believers in God. Let us, therefore, pin our faith on the law that the body is transient and the soul immortal. Deshbandhu's physical frame was ephemeral and has been destroyed, but the destruction of the soul is an impossibility. And not only that. The name of that man who has rendered such signal services to India, made such staggering sacrifices, is for ever deathless. And to the degree that everybody—young or old, man or woman—imbibes the qualities of Deshbandhu in his life, to that degree he perpetuates his memory.

"We do not possess Deshbandhu's intelligence or cleverness. But there are some things—one or two—which we share with him in common and which can do as well as he did. Deshbandhu tried to learn spinning in Pabna. In Darjeeling I was myself his teacher. And he had promised me that, health permitting, he would try to be an expert spinner. He had made his house in Darjeeling a spinning school. His wife had resolved to turn the wheel daily. His daughter who was there, his sister and sister's son and daughter were all spinning regularly. Repeatedly he would emphasise : "I believe it essential to go to the Council. The work would suffer, if I didn't go. But let me say at the same time, the spinning wheel is not only necessary, but the council-work itself would become impossible without it." Ever since he accepted Khadi, he never gave it up till the last breath. And what shall I say of his labour to unite Hindus and Muslims ? What shall I say of the love that he bore for untouchables ? Why, only last night, when we were leaving Barisal, a friend told me that he was helped first by Deshbandhu and then by Dr. Roy.

"You all cannot go to the Council, but can definitely do all the 3 things. I consider myself a loyal servant of India and a loyal brother and colleague of Deshbandhu. After hearing of his death, I take this solemn oath, keeping you all as witnesses, that while adhering to my view, I will give to him and his followers, the councillors, even greater help than I have hitherto done. And this is my prayer to God : 'Let nothing be done by this hand, let no word escape these lips, that may be a

hindrance to their work !' There was indeed a difference of views between us two as regards the councils, but our hearts remained united in spite of it. Such differences are bound to exist, so long as the earth lasts. Despite that difference, I could understand well enough that the same patriotism that impelled me to do a particular thing made him do some other. Harm can only come when we say one thing and have another at heart.

"From my five days' contact with Deshbandhu in Darjeeling I could see that his heart was getting softer and his love for those who differed from him growing deeper every day. But let me not give out those memories here. They are too sacred for publicity.

"In conclusion, I want to stress this one thing at this meeting. Deshbandhu was a rare gem of India. His services to India had no equal. And I wish and pray that we all may absorb in ourselves his spirit of service, his depth of love, his greatness of sacrifice. The path ahead of us is uphill and dangerous. In our pilgrimage along that path we would like to be helped as much as possible. All the same, considering it healthy for him not to lean upon extraneous support, the pilgrim to the shrine of freedom should rely on himself, on his own *purushartha* ( spiritual effort ). And that was Deshbandhu's life principle also. It is the self that is the enemy and the self that is friend of the Self. ( Bhagwadgita VI. 5 ). Let us all, therefore, shake ourselves up and be as self-dependent as Deshbandhu was. God grant him peace !"

@ "Das' reckless sacrifice, Motilalji's ( Nehru ) calculated sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

@ Dr. Roy's remark : "Death has created a void—none even next best."

I have seen madcaps eager to touch Gandhiji's feet even at the time when, in the midst of an immense crowd, he was carrying the bier of Deshbandhu on 22.6.1925 in Calcutta. As

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1. The manuscript diary does not mention the name of the speaker.



it was impossible to bend down and touch his feet, they wanted to touch his body ! This only showed that they did not know the propriety of the situation and had lost all their discretion and good manners.

"This blind adoration would tempt one to be an athiest !" burst out Gandhiji, fed up with this infliction. "You have but to touch the feet and all at once you are redeemed and your life's goal reached ! How can this superstition be driven out of people's minds ? The only way to do so is for men of understanding to give no quarter to the practice. If you admire my life, join me in my work and honour me that way. But this is impossible."

### Deshbandhu

तुमि बन्धु तुमि नाथ, निशिदिन तुमि आमार;  
तुमि सुख, तुमि शान्ति, तुमि हे अमृत पाथार ।  
तुमि तो आनन्द-लोक, जुड़ाओ प्राण, नाशो शोक;  
तापहरण तोमार चरण, असीम शरण दीन जतार ॥

Thou my friend and Thou my Lord,  
Ever and ever mine;  
Thou alone my rest and peace,  
Thou ambrosial brine.  
Remove my grief, comfort my soul,  
O Saviour, save me please !  
O, Thou refuge of men forlorn !  
From fires me release.<sup>1</sup>

The room in which I am sitting and writing was once Deshbandhu's sleeping room. The pictures of Srikrishna and Jesus, of Chaitanya<sup>2</sup> and Gandhiji, are all there on the walls, but there are photographs of Deshbandhu of different ages also. Today is the seventh day of his death and yet it is these photos on which the eyes are inevitably centred. Though just

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1. Give me release ( mukti ) from the three fires of mental anguish, physical disease and adverse circumstances.

2. A mediaeval saint who created a tremendous surge of revival of the *bhakti* of Lord Krishna in Bengal by his kirtans ( dance-songs ).

by their sides are pin-ups of spiritual giants, conquerors of sin and sorrow and temptation, it is the Deshbandhu's photographs which capture the mind. It refuses to think of anything else.

Whoever could expect when we left Darjeeling on the 9th, that a wire of his death would reach us on the 16th ? He used to get fever every Monday, but it would subside on Tuesday. Even on the Monday preceding our visit to Darjeeling, he had this weekly attack which, as usual, had left him the next day. During our stay with him Deshbandhu used even to go out for a walk with us. He was present on Saturday at the speech which Gandhiji delivered before the missionary sisters. He could even climb up a high hill stand on the way. When we were returning, Gandhiji went one way and Deshbandhu and I another. A rikshaw was kept ready for Deshbandhu in case he felt tired. A steep ascent came in our way. He got into the rikshaw, but after going up a short distance, we came to a big piece of rock that completely blocked the path. It was not possible to bypass it on either side. Should we then go back ? It was decided to go across the rock by lifting up the riksha on to the rock, if that was possible. The Bhutias who were carrying the rikshaw refused to do so, but Deshbandhu said, "We will both help you." They then agreed and after great exertion we succeeded in bringing the rikshaw to the other side. Who could have dreamt that the man, who could put in such physical labour and then even walk two miles, would be no more within only 8 days ?

We were to start on Tuesday. On Monday evening he began to shiver with cold and got fever as usual. His limbs used to ache with acute pain, when fever was on. Gandhiji began to press his limbs. A short time after, I requested Gandhiji to let me relieve him and press Deshbandhu's legs. That made Deshbandhu laugh and say, "Yes, that will tell me which of the two is the better masseur. The best to massage my legs ( here-a man of sweet words ) among No-changers was, I think, Manilal Kothari. Dear good fellow ! He told me : 'Take my life but not my vote !' With this recollection of Manilal's party loyalty,



Deshbandhu laughed very loud and we could not help laughing with him. He would thus forget, and make others forget, his excruciating pain in the body. That wily fever disappeared again on Tuesday. Gandhiji was sitting on Deshbandhu's bed just facing him. Seeing Gandhiji there quite a number of men would sneak in that small room, but without getting irritated Deshbandhu would smile and let them get in. "Here comes your *bhakta* ( devotee )," he said to Gandhiji. "Let him, poor man, have that much merit ( of your *darshan* )." On that day Gandhiji got a rather large amount of money from the visitors. "It is my house that has earned for you so much," remarked Deshbandhu ; "I must get a commission." "Yes these heaps of flowers. That is your commission," was Gandhiji's repartee. "A Bania to the backbone after all," commented Deshbandhu and the house rang again with his laugh. Could anybody have then dreamt that within 8 days this resounding laughter would dissolve into the peace of the Himalayas and the man who cheered up others with it fly away to Kailash ( Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva ) after receiving the loving tribute of millions of bereaved souls ?

But what was never imagined, never dreamt of, happened. A month ago, when I saw him at Faridpur, sickness was evident on the face. But at Darjeeling his face seemed to have regained the glow of fresh blood. Add to this his regular short walks and his jokes that split our sides. How was it possible to suspect that the end was so near ? Relieved of her anxiety for his health, even his sister had gone back to Calcutta after a stay with him for 2 months. But on that fateful week the fever came earlier —on Sunday instead of Monday— and came with nasty virulence. It persisted on Monday. On that day he began to yearn for a meeting with his Guru. "Will nobody take me to my Guru ?" he would urge. As for him, it is certain he had the premonition of the coming event ; for, he would repeatedly say, "Bhola is calling me" ( his younger brother who died 20 years ago in Darjeeling ), and all that day he kept chanting the mantra his Guru had given him. But the relatives

realised the significance of that day-long chanting only after his spirit had flown away. On Tuesday morning the chanting stopped, the body grew progressively colder and he lost the power of speech. It was then that the family felt the alarm. Telegrams were flashed to doctors. The *lila*<sup>1</sup> ended at 5. The funeral procession started from Darjeeling the next day. The Governor had given orders to the Railway Company to make the best arrangements. Hundreds of officers and hundreds of friends formed the procession. Dr. Jagdish Bose wept like mad. But that saintly bereaved widow Vasanti Devi steeled her heart and corked up her grief. Before leaving Darjeeling she gathered her children around her and offered prayers to God :

Thou my friend and Thou my Lord,  
Ever and ever mine;  
Thou alone my rest and peace,  
Thou, ambrosial brine.  
Remove my grief, comfort my soul,  
O Saviour, save me please !  
O, Thou refuge of men forlorn !  
From fires me release.

Years ago when the gigantic steamer, *The Titanic* was sinking those on board embraced Death with hymns on their lips. When she saw her husband, verily a Titan himself, fall by the sword of Death, she too, the brave lady that she was, sang that hymn to God, 'The ambrosial brine, remover of sorrows, refuge of the helpless and forlorn,' as she felt she was sinking into the sea of grief.

Let us also give up our sorrow. It is the Almighty who has chosen to carry him off from his field of work and enhance the burden of the survivors. Let us remember that and pray to Him to let the burden sit lightly on our shoulders and, instead of bewailing over the destruction of the fragile body of *Desh-bandhu*, let us cherish the undying body of glory that he has left behind and thus purify ourselves.

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1. Living and material objects are considered among Hindus as the Lord's varied *lila* or sport.



Whether it was due to a presentiment, or don't know why, but he always kept a work of the Radha-Swami sect ( a sect of Vaishnavism ) near his pillow. And once I caught a glimpse of him singing a hymn when he was alone. It was only at Darjeeling that I saw the child-like simplicity of his soul. I had never had an occasion to have long talks with him earlier. It happened many times, moreover, that his leonine demeanour held me up and I had not the courage to engage him in heart-to-heart talks. But at Darjeeling he himself called me to sit by his bed and we had an unforgettable time !

"Now tell me, what were the places you went round to ? Tell me if Gandhiji's conveniences were consulted everywhere that he went. You may be astonished, but I do know that he was not properly looked after at Dacca, because of the quarrels of the two parties ( Swarajists and No-changers ). I am particular about keeping myself in touch with all these things. And did he meet my Guru at Pabna ? Had he no talk at all with Gandhiji ?"

"No. He kept to his silence completely."

"O, that was why Gandhiji was not impressed. But it was in that silence itself that real correspondence with him lay. And shall I say how I came in his contact ? I always like to go wherever there is a *kirtan* ( group-singing or a religious story interspersed with songs and dances ). It happened that I had to go to Pabna after my release from jail. There was a *kirtan* at the Ashram of this Guru and I went. For a day or two, he did not utter a word. I stayed on nevertheless. Since I stuck on resolutely, I had some talk with him one day ; better say, he flashed a searchlight that penetrated my heart. In a moment he knew me through and through — as if he was the Indweller — and I had an irresistible attraction for him. On the next day the subject of the *mantra* was broached; with maddening eagerness I prepared myself for it and took it. I had heard formerly things about the Radha-Swami sect, but they had left me cold. My inner sight opened only after I saw him."

This talk taught me the significance of what Deshbandhu had written only a few days ago to Gandhiji : "The Ashram of that man is an institution. At least on me, who belonged to the rank of disciples of the lowest fitness, that man exercised the deepest influence. I am sure you will find that Ashram excellent."

The talk drifted on to other things – first that of the sacrifices of the young men of Bengal. As he himself had conquered the highest peak of renunciation, he almost brushed aside my reference to their self-sacrifice, as if it were a trifling thing.

"Sacrifice, there is. But everyone ploughs his lonely furrow and cherishes distrust and jealousy for everyone else. This distrust is, I think, the fruit of our policy of violence. If only Mahatmaji stays in Bengal and unites them all ! Mahatmaji and I may meet them all and canalise their energies for one single goal." Every sentence that he said was dripping with the acceptance of the fundamental principle behind the policy of non-violence.

Then he referred to numerous workers of Bengal and with surprising frankness. Gandhiji had intended to stay for 2 days with him. But he and Vasanti Devi sent numerous wires to get Gandhiji's programme changed and detained him for 3 days more. So Gandhiji asked him to put the Khadi work in Bengal on a sure foundation. It was decided that he and Satishbabu should meet and draw up a scheme for it. "But where shall we arrange for his stay ?" asked Gandhiji. "Right here," he replied at once. "But it means overcrowding here. There is not an inch of space to spare." "Where is the question of overcrowding ?" Deshbandhu rejoined, "I can get a whole room vacated for him; or he can sleep with us." Satishbabu had a slight cold in the evening. He was sitting on the floor below and wanted his woollen coat. Instead of sending a man upstairs Deshbandhu himself came up, made me search for the coat and, as I was going down with it, stopped me and carried it downstairs himself. In the evening he said, "We haven't a spare cot. Let my own be taken to his room. I can sleep on the floor as well." What an anxious concern to see that his own



bed-stead was given away for the guest, even though he was confined to bed nearly the whole day ! But this deep regard for the guest was his inheritance.

Speaking of hospitality he once said to Gandhiji : "That a guest might go away disappointed from our house was an impossibility. There is an anecdote of one of my ancestors which I should recount. He gave express orders that the doors should be open to the guest day and night and he was to be given a warm welcome at all hours. It often happened that my ancestress could not sleep well and she sometime got fed up. In order to find out if his order was properly carried out, the grandsire went away to some other village one day, came home in the guise of a sannyasi at the dead hour of 2 a. m. and asked for food and shelter ! The lady was just then free from her duties and about to go to bed. "The fellow comes at even 2 !" she grumbled. The old man grew furious at 'the fellow' and gave up living in the house for 5 years ! That was the hospitality of our forefathers."<sup>1</sup>

And the family's liberality also knew no limit. As Deshbandhu earned lakhs and scattered lakhs in charity,—till he left a debt of 2 lakhs (2 hundred thousand)—so did his father die a debtor to the tune of 67 thousand rupees. But the way Deshbandhu paid off his father's debt is a glorious chapter in history, owing to the love and the feat of honesty it revealed. When Deshbandhu returned from England in 1893, he found himself caught in many difficulties. His father had incurred a debt of 67000 rupees, who, therefore, declared himself insolvent. Though the debt was thus not binding on him, from matchless filial love and devotion the son went on saving for 15 years every possible paisa with rigorous economy. And then, one fine day Babu Surendranath Mallick received a letter from Deshbandhu : "I am able today to pay back, by God's grace, the amount your father had lent to mine " For Surendra Mallick it was a windfall. The debt was legally time-barred long

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<sup>1</sup> Those were times of very big joint families and stern patriarchal rule was a necessity. Hindu dharma besides says, "Treat the guest as God."

since and nobody had even suggested its payment to Deshbandhu. But without any legal liability and without any suggestion from others he sent 67000 rupees cash down in order to be free from his father's debt. Sir Lawrence Jenkins was at the time a High Court Judge in Calcutta. They say, he made a special reference to this event in the Court and declared, "Such instances are rare in history." Deshbandhu never did a thing by half. Not for him the middle path. In everything he attempted, he scaled the highest peak. After carrying paternal devotion to its apex in this way, he began to live in times of prosperity in a style that even royalty might envy and then, renouncing all that dazzling pomp and pelf, became a *sannyasi* in the twinkling of an eye. The mind can recall only one glorious parallel—of Gopichand<sup>1</sup>—from the past.

He had carved a niche for himself in the literary shrine of Bengal as a poetic genius and a writer of vigorous prose. But he bade adieu even to the joy of literary creation for rendering whole-hearted service to the country. Readers of his poems in the book 'Sagar-sangit' (music of the sea) know what his poetic attainments were. In his *bhajans* (hymns) and *kirtans* one gets a glimpse of his heart saturated with devotional fervour. Let me give here at least one of the *kirtans* composed by him :

दासो दासो, प्राणेर निधि  
 प्राणे प्राणे, बँधे दासो ।  
 सकल अंग कँदे मरे,  
 चोखेर काछे एने दासो ।—दासो०  
 आमि सईते नारि दूरे थेके  
 तोमार काछे, डेके नासो ।

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1. King Gopichand lived a life that was the last word in luxury. As he was once having a bath on the paved courtyard within the palace, a tear dropped on him from the eye of his mother who was looking down from the balcony above. The thought had struck her that even that luxury and that life were destined to end one day. When Gopichand learnt the cause of the tear, he immediately became a *sannyasi*.



बुकेर धन बुकेर माभे  
 बुकेर परे बेंधे दाग्रो ।  
 भावते गेले तोमार कथा  
 सकल अंग शिहरे,  
 भुलते गेले तोमार कथा  
 प्राणेर माभे बिहरे ।  
 ग्रामि भावते नारि, भुलते नारि  
 तोमार काछे डेके नाग्रो ।  
 बुकेर धन बुकेर माभे  
 बुकेर परे बेंधे दाग्रो ।

Link up Thy Life with this my life;  
 Thou, treasure of my life !  
 Every limb and every fibre  
 Are with anguish rife.

'Away from Thee !' I can't bear it,  
 Reveal thyself to me;  
 Bind my heart's gem with my heart,  
 O call me back to Thee !

Thy remembrance, sweet and painful,  
 Thrills me through and through;  
 If at times, I Thee forget  
 The pang afflicts me too;  
 I can't forget and can't remember,  
 I know not what to do.

Call me back to Thee, my Lord !  
 Let me be wholly Thine;  
 O treasure of my heart ! I pray,  
 Entwine Thy heart with mine.

But neither his power of soulful singing nor his love of literature could deflect him from his course. These also, his heart's dearest pursuits, he sacrificed at the altar of Mother Ind. At last only a few months ago, in order to wipe off his debt and dedicate the surplus at the Mother's feet, he sold

away his dear ancestral palace and put himself at ease. Crowning his life of sacrifice by this superb act, he died serving the country till the last.

The funeral procession was taken out on Wednesday with the resounding chants of "Hari bolo", "Hari bolo" (Take Hari's, i. e., God's name). The profusely flower-decorated carriage that preceded the bier had, of course, a spinning wheel prominently placed; but around the wheel his life's motto :

**जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी**

( Mother and Mother-land are greater than even Heaven ) was depicted through flowers woven into big letters. May not the holy fire, that reduced his body to ashes, have by the act imprinted that same mantra into the hearts of the millions of mourners present there ?

How marvellous and mysterious is the working of God's will ! It now seems as if Deshbandhu called Gandhiji to his bed-side in Darjeeling by a pressing invitation, detained him longer, and thus arranged a tete-a-tete to their hearts' content, just because he wanted Gandhiji himself to broadcast that motto and give his funeral tribute to the deceased friend in the best manner possible. When the wire intimating the death of that invaluable friend came to him, Gandhiji's first reaction reminded one of an age-old oak that, after standing against countless hails and hurricanes, was struck down by a stroke of lightning and its vitals were split. When that was the effect on a man like Gandhiji, what an unbearable shock it must have been to those thousands of Bengali youths who had, at the trumpet-call of Deshbandhu, sacrificed their all for the cause of the country ! All of them are sitting in doleful silence; and, with grim self-restraint, Gandhiji has now steeled his heart and taken them all under his wings in order to be their stay and solace. Cancelling all his programmes outright, he has locked himself in Bengal in order to console the stricken land and give it exhortation to complete the unfinished work of Deshbandhu.



But Deshbandhu was Deshbandhu. The throne he has vacated remains unoccupied still.

26-6-1925

At a condolence meeting of the Gujaratis in Calcutta in memory of Deshbandhu Das Gandhiji said :

“In passing the resolution expressing our sorrow we have done no extraordinary feat – we have but discharged a common duty. The right time for expressing our grief is not today, it was on the 18th. I suppose you joined the funeral procession on that date. That apart, we have already fixed July 1st as the national day of mourning. You will be present in the meeting on that day too; so that will be another occasion for expressing our sentiments.

“It is but a common thing, if people gather on such occasions to perform their duty. But I should be called to such functions for one purpose only. All those Gujaratis, Marwaris, Beharis and others—whatever their province or their religion—who are born in Bengal or have made Bengal their homestay must contribute their share to the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. That fund is collected in order to perpetuate the memory of Deshbandhu. You all know that only last year he gave away his own house on Russa Road. That building is to be used for a women’s hospital and a training centre for nurses. The collection of this fund must be completed before the 1st. Who will take up this collection of 10 lakhs of rupees we have resolved upon as the target ? When some Gujaratis came to see me, I told them, ‘Don’t call me, if you are not going to collect a fund.’ Before coming here, I was telling everybody, ‘I am going there for hard cash—from my Gujarati brothers.’ This is an occasion not for titters, but for grief. I inquired of Anandji—a downright practical man that I am, I immediately asked him—‘What has been done for the Fund there ?’ The question was intended to see that my condition was accepted. You need not have called me here unless you were going to give me a purse That was the right course. This is a time when you cannot take any other work from me. To call me for anything else is to misuse my

name and service. If you don't mean to collect a fund, a barren meeting like this is nothing to me. Whoever else wants it, may have it. There have been occasions in my life when I have collected lakhs of rupees in one hour. So a collection has to be made here and now.

"And I want to say one thing in confidence. I have a fascination for India, but for Gujarat specially. I have not talked to any Gujarati about this Fund, because I am sure Gujaratis will give their contribution on their own. I go to see Vasanti Devi everyday. You are going to send me to her only to hand over the resolution you pass here. Does it amount to anything? That lady wants nothing for herself. But when I see her, I must tell her how much the Gujaratis here loved Desh-bandhu."

Immediately Anandji Haridas, Gordhandas Trikamdas, J.V. Mehta, Mohanlal Chimanlal Vadiwala; Keshavji Hemchand, Tribhovandas and others got up and started the collection.

In conclusion Gandhiji said :

"I felt unhappy at first when the meeting began, but you turned my disappointment into joy. Not once but many times I have used strong language against Gujaratis, but every time they have accepted it in the right spirit and given me whatever I wanted. That convinces me that when we get Swaraj, Gujaratis will have contributed their due share in the attainment. Who knows which province will be the first to hoist the flag of victory? Every province has to enter the race. There can be rivalry in all fields, but only for good aims it is commendable. If there are four sons, they may compete among themselves for doing highest service to their mother. The holy cause of service is a field open to everybody for competition. Therefore, I key up one province now and then another, according to the needs of the situation. But it is only to Gujaratis that I give the bitterest home-truths and with the utmost coolness. But I have never been misunderstood. You could have left the meeting when I began my strictures, but you did not. My loving taunts do not go fruitless besides. You have, as its result, contributed



Rs. 6257-9-0 in promises and Rs. 789 in cash. But I don't congratulate you. I had expected Gujaratis to give at least ten thousand, though business is slack these days, I know. From Marwaris I hope to collect lakhs, but not here. It was the Gujaratis who had subscribed liberally in Bombay. It was they who upheld the honour of India in the collection of ten million rupees.<sup>1</sup> The amount promised here is not bad but certainly not enough. I ask you, therefore, to come forward and post your energies with the determination not to rest till the figure 100,000 is reached. Let there be none among you who promises a definite amount and then resiles. Let them pay up right tomorrow, so that their names can be announced the day after. After you hit the target, we shall be able to shame other non-Bengali communities also into paying liberally. And beware ! Don't let the Marwaris tell me that Gujaratis have cheated me. It is easy for everybody to cheat me, but it does not matter to me if the world hoodwinks me any number of times. It is really not I who am cheated. Nobody has ever said to me, 'Gujarat has cheated you.' Bardoli ( a county in Surat District ) cheated me, but nobody ever told me so. Some day the world will know how my account with Bardoli really stands.<sup>2</sup>

"How shall I express my thanks ? God bless you. I am

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1. In March 1921, the All India Congress Committee ( i. e. Gandhiji practically) decided to collect ten million rupees before 30th June for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Everybody then thought the amount too far above the capacity and nationalist spirit of India, but Gandhiji roused such fervour that it was over-subscribed and he was hailed as a "miracle-worker."

2. Gandhiji refers to the mass civil-disobedience which he was about to launch in Bardoli in February 1922, but which he withdrew owing to the outburst of violence at Chauri Chaura in U. P., as he thought that the whole country should remain non-violent to make any mass civil-disobedience a success. Later, Gandhiji felt that the necessary pre conditions for launching mass civil-disobedience were not carried out by Bardoli, though he was led to believe they were. But in 1928 Bardoli recovered its lost glory by the successful no-tax campaign against increment in its land revenue, at the time when the freedom struggle was at its lowest.

overwhelmed by the debt of obligations you and the Marwaris have conferred on me."

Gandhiji received a letter from the Maharaja of Burdwan. It stated that the object of the Fund (Deshbandhu Memorial) was laudable and he would give 5,000 rupees as promised, but in two instalments—the first, when the fund reached the figure of 5 lakhs, and the next, when it came to 9. Gandhiji's reply (d. 27. 6. 1925) :

@ "I cannot be a true friend, as I regard myself, of Rajas and Maharajas, if I did not tell you I was hurt by your letter conveying your decision about subscription to the Memorial Fund. It betrays, may I say, a weak faith in your own countrymen and an incorrect attitude. You have graciously permitted your name to appear as one of the signatories to the appeal. If it signifies anything, it ought to mean a fixed determination on your part to make the collection a success. But the conditions you impose are calculated to defeat the collection. If you, a Maharaja and signatory, have the right to make payment conditional upon the collection reaching a certain total, how much more the humbler signatories? And if they all impose such conditions, how can the collection proceed at all? In all the many subscriptions I have had the privilege of collecting, I have known the signatories to be sureties for the success of funds for which they made themselves sponsors. Will you not revise the wholly incorrect position you have taken up, let me hope, quite unconsciously?"

### **Deshbandhu's Remembrance**

I had to think out for a while the right word for giving a heading to this article. I wrote the word 'shraaddha' at first—as that is what they call it here—but I don't see any performance of 'shraaddha' here, as we understand the term to mean. In its place the whole atmosphere is flooded with *kirtans* of Lord Hari for the last fifteen days. The eldest daughter performed the 'shraaddha' on the fourth day—with all the prescribed rites omitted! All that was done was severe self-restraint in food etc. on her part alone and continuous remem-



brance of God on everyone's. The whole day was spent in singing hymns composed either by Deshbandhu himself or by Vaishnava poets on Lord Krishna and Radha.<sup>1</sup> 'Kirtan' by itself is a hoary institution that is pitting itself fairly successfully against the invasions of modern civilization. But in Bengal I found for the first time this kind of performance of 'shraaddha'—with hymns and *kirtans* only, instead of the customary funeral rites. Peculiar circumstances have given rise to this novel form of 'shraaddha'. Deshbandhu's father and grand-father were members of the Brahmo Samaj ( a reforming unitarian sect which denounces caste, idol-worship, orthodox ritualism etc. ). But Deshbandhu himself had an innate fascination for 'Kirtans' and so in his time there came to be an inter-mingling of Vaishnava traditions and Brahmo observances and that practice continues still. After the eldest daughter, the eldest sister and then her son performed these 'shraaddhas'. A detailed description of one such is worth giving :

As Calcutta is a modern city, people are requested to attend such a *kirtan* through formal invitation cards. Deshbandhu's younger brother, a High Court Judge at Patna has brought with him a group of kirtan-singers and they will stay here till the 16th day of the death. This Judge, Sri Prafulla Ranjan Das, is himself an inveterate lover of *s kirtans*. He has even formed from lawyers in Patna a group of kirtanists. That group also had come here specially for Deshbandhu's 'shraaddha'. It performed a *kirtan* entitled 'Nimai Sannyasa' ( *sannyasa* of Lord Chaitanya ) in the morning. I heard many other Kirtanists during these days. People came in hundreds to listen to them but these *kirtans* did not impress me at all. There seemed to be so much affectedness in them all ! But this *kirtan* cast a spell. Sri Navadwipa Babu, a lawyer in Patna, sang and dilated

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1. Radha = worship. In His childhood Sri Krishna ( meaning one who attracts ) was the cynosure of cowherds ( = human beings ), both boys and girls. Radha, a girl, loved Him most deeply. Vaishnava poets have made Her their most favourite theme to personify the highest form of devotional raptures by making Her His sweet-heart. Radha's grief, after Krishna went away to Mathura, is the highest stage of devotional love for God.

upon the story of Lord Sri Chaitanya's *sannyasa* with a pathos that stirred the heart to its depth. These kirtans are very similar to our Harikathas ( religious stories-cum songs popular in Gujarat ), but here, when the story-teller begins to sing, the group that joins him is larger and the kirtanist as well as the accompanying pakhwaj-players ( a kind of drum ) are swept off by emotions and dance frantically. While many groups spoil the charm by such excess, I did not see even a trace of it in Navadwipa Bapu.

The kirtanist (Navadwipa Bapu) first invoked the presence of Nitai<sup>1</sup> by the prayer : The kirtanist :

"Oh, Lord ! Come, Please come ! Inebriate us with the wine of Love and remove from our eyes the delusion of 'maya' ( love of sensual pleasures )."

And then he began the story of the *sannyasa* of 'Gauranga Prabhu' ( Prabhu=Lord. Lord Chaitanya was given the formal name of Gauranga—meaning having white limbs—because he possessed an exceedingly charming personality ).

Kirtanist : "He took *sannyasa* at the early age of 24. The incident has been noted down by devotees in the language of the heart and the ink of tears. I am now recounting it.

"O Lord ! Be Thou the Hidden Bard and wake the strings of this my lyre ( 'vina' ).

"He too was born a human being just like ourselves in Navadwipa ( now Nadia ) four hundred years ago. He visualised himself as a Gopi ( a cowherd woman and devotee of Lord Krishna )."

"This is how his birth was invoked : 'Say not a word about that libertine—Krishna',<sup>2</sup> burst out a Gopi with her hands on her ears ! 'I have given up sullyng my lips with the name of

1. Nitai, i. e., Nityananda was older than Lord Chaitanya and is considered to be Sri Chaitanya's 'elder brother'. He too was a very fervent devotee of Lord Krishna. His invocation always precedes that of Lord Chaitanya in Kirtans. He is reputed to be the reincarnation of Balaram, Lord Krishna's elder brother.

2. Krishna is the lover *par excellence* of all devotees. He is, therefore, called a libertine.



that heartless fellow.' When they heard the blasphemy, the devotees of Krishna complained to Him, 'We can't bear these scurrilous attacks on you !' Krishna replied : 'I shall take birth in the form of Nimai.' ( He was given this pet name from the bitter 'neem'—margosa-tree, in order to ward off any evil eye that might be cast on him owing to his handsome features ).

Kirtanist :—"This Nimai caught the craze for devotion to Krishna and decided to take *sannyasa*.

"The rumour reached the mother's ear. She questioned him.

"Mother : 'Now tell me, Nimai, tell me, if what I hear is true. Are you really going to be a *sannyasi* ? Are you going to thrust a dagger in Mummy's heart ? Will you desert me, this miserable unlucky woman,<sup>1</sup> and go away ? O, my Krishna, you are still a sucking babe ! Will you leave me and turn me mad ?'

Nimai : 'Mummy, please.' Don't be silly. Why have such forebodings ?'

Mother : 'If I lose you. I shall drown myself in the Ganga.'

Kirtanist : "This same dialogue seems to be repeated today."<sup>2</sup>

Nimai : 'Mother, I can't stay at home any longer. Just think, Mother ! How can I understand the sorrows of the poor, if I didn't become poor myself ? I will, therefore, embrace poverty and walk out.'

"Mother : 'Nimai, dear ! Are you not afraid of the sin of matricide ? Please listen. I will join you, ramble with you on the solitary banks of rivers, chant with you Lord Hari's name. I won't come in the way of your prayers and invocations.'

Nimai : 'Rest assured, mummy ! I am not going to desert you. I will bring back the elder brother ( Vishwarupa, who had turned a recluse at 16 ).'

Mother : 'But what's the sense in becoming poor ?'

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1. Shachi, the mother, had already lost six sons by early death and the seventh had become a recluse. All her hopes were pinned on Nimai the eighth son. Krishna, it happens, was also the 8th son of His mother.

2. The Kirtanist figuratively applies here the old story of Nimai's renunciation to Deshbandhu Das who also had given up his princely legal practice.

Nimai : 'O, these Shastris, these Pandits, of Nadia ! They are dry as dust. They don't know love. They don't know God.'

Mother : 'Then chant Hari's name to them. But why be poor ?'

Nimai : 'But I want to infect every soul with the love of God and free it from fear.'

Kirtanist : "This was Nimai Pandit's hint that he was going to give up teaching and be a *sannyasi* begging from door to door, that people were beating him ( i. e. his followers ) at the time, but, after he became a recluse, all trouble would end."<sup>1</sup>

Kirtanist : "God was looked upon once as the God of wrath, punishing the powerful and wicked ( भयानां भयं, भीषणं भीषणानाम् ), since human society was caught in the fear of danger in those times. Today we take Him for the God of Love, because we have known the greatness, the glory, of love. Gouranga's lila ( sport ) was verily nothing but God's descent into an ordinary man's form saturated with love."

Nimai : "Ma ! The Lord tells me I shall appear to you in my indestructible form ( =love ). Please, mummy, grant me leave ( for *sannyasa* ) with a cheerful face."

Kirtanist : "Mother was thus somehow persuaded to grant the permission. But there was Vishnupriya<sup>2</sup> still to be tackled. That distressed young wife ( still in her teens ) sits near the

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1. Nimai had made a name as the youngest but the most erudite scholar in Nadia, itself a famous seat of learning. He had started a school for teaching Sanskrit, logic, and other subjects. His kirtans evoked wide support specially from the masses. Alarmed at this popular heresy the Hindu Iharisees once appealed to the Muslim ruler to ban the kirtan processions. But so overwhelming was the *unarmed* populace that accompanied Nimai to lodge a counter petition, that the Nawab withdrew the ban and became Nimai's *de facto* follower. Till then His followers were beaten and persecuted. This instance may be termed a precursor of Gandhiji's mass civil disobediences.

2. Gouranga's second wife's name, meaning Beloved of Lord Vishnu. His first wife's name was Laxmi ( Lord Vishnu's spouse ). Both the names are thus characteristically suggestive, though all the three are real personages of history. Gouranga is regarded as Krishna's avatar, but in Radha's beautiful form. Love between the two was so deep as to interchange personalities.



Lotus Feet of Nimai and looks steadfast at His beautiful form. Her throat is choked with grief. She wants to say something but can't. At a late hour she feels drowsy and falls asleep. And what is Nimai doing at the time? He reflects within himself: 'I have surrendered myself now to Lord Shrikrishna. I am completely His. There is now nothing like *'my family.'* Why then, my mind! dost thou regard her as *'thine'*?'"

"With these thoughts Nimai leaves His home for ever. But before departing, he repeatedly turns his head behind to cast a parting glance at Sushilaa, Saralaa, Akhilaa, Abalaa (girl friends of Gouranga and Vishnupriya) as they lay unconscious in deep sleep.

"Vishnupriya too was sleeping like a log. She was unaware that Nimai was leaving her for good. Poor girl! She had no idea of the crushing blow that destiny was striking her. She wakes up after a while, looks around, fails to see the Lord of her heart. Startled, she sits up. To assure herself that her eyes did not deceive her, she passes her hand over the mattress of the bed! Alas! What she fears is but too true! Convinced, she strikes her head with her hand violently, rolls on the ground in despair, bursts into loud laments, wonders how it was that a thunderbolt struck her, though the sky was so clear! That thought makes her feel the impact of the blow even more strongly and she weeps more and more bitterly, as, in grief inconsolable, she rolls on the ground again and again.

"As clouds pass away pouring drops of water on earth, tears flow out of her beautiful eyes. Is it a water-fall from the Heavenly Ganges? Wherever they fall, like the moisture of passing clouds, the cries of her wailing enter so deep into her ears, that it is impossible for her to suffer any longer. She *must* do something. She *can't* stay at home. She gets ready to leave.

"'Oh woman! But how far out can you walk? You will have to halt exhausted and retrace your steps. You had better remember Him, keep the entrancing idol of your heart ever in

mind without a moment's break. And if you do that, your eyes will drip with nectar.' Let others give her that advice. On her part she stands transfixed and, with eyes unbatting sees ( in a vision ) the loadstone of her heart, the ocean of compassion, receding further and further away.

Nimai tells her : 'It was for taking *sannyasa* that I left the home and have even taken it already. Now with the supernatural joy that you will gain, I will drown the sorrows of all creatures on earth. Forget the thought that I have done you wrong. Be completely absorbed in Lord Krishna's devotion. Spend your life on earth in worship only.'

"Nimai Pandit thus renounced his home for ever.

"Who is He over there, on the bank of the Heavenly Ganges, who cries out 'Hari Bole', 'Hari Bole' ( say Hari ) and dances ? How lustrous like gold His complexion is ! How charming He looks as the moon makes Him a figure of silver ! Watch him ! All over his body, wherever you cast your eyes, you find the name 'Radha' imprinted !

"But may He not be the same He—*THE FLUTIST*—Who made the Gopis dance on the bank of Yamuna ?

"And Vishwarupa ( the elder brother ) meets Him. He wonders: 'Meseems, I know Him ! There it is—that lustre of the moon shining in His dark eyes ! Yes ! I have caught Him from His eyes ! They tell me everything.'

Skirting out of the beaten track of orthodox kirtanists, Navadwip Babu thus interwove the anecdote of Nimai's *sannyasa* with Deshbandhu's life. Nimai tells His mother:

कांगाल हये चले जाबो मा ।

"I will leave my wedded wife.

Be wed to poverty."

On these two lines he constructed the whole edifice of Vaishnavism and, explaining it as the dharma of compassion for all creatures, showed how Nimai became a *sannyasi* in order to reveal to the world this essence of Vaishnavism.

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1. Lord Krishna had a flute whose song charmed both man and nature.



Deshbandhu had discarded all the outward signs. He never wore the Vaishnava 'kanthi' ( a rosary of tulsi beads ), did not put the Vaishnava mark on his forehead, and neither visited a Vaishnava temple nor told the beads of a rosary. All the same for the sake of his helpless and miserable brothers and sisters he took the solemn oath:

आर तो धरे रोईले नाहि.

कांगाल ह्ये चले जावो मा ।

"I cannot bear to see the land,  
Submerged in misery;  
I will leave my home, my all,  
Embracing poverty."

And why ?

कांगाल नईले कि कांगालेर दुःख बोझे ?

कांगाल ह्ये चले जावो मा ।

"How else can I the sorrows of  
The wretched ever see  
I will leave my home, my all,  
Embracing poverty."

In this way the kirtanist showed how Deshbandhu was a Vaishnava of the highest type.

Then again they all met in the afternoon. The rite to be performed then was hymn-singing and 'shastra-paatha' ( exposition of a scriptural text ). Any deserving gentleman is requested to deliver a discourse by way of this 'shastra paatha'. After the death of a brother of Deshbandhu, it was the Poet Rabindranath who took some text from an Upanishad and delivered a sermon. It was not possible to call him this time and Gandhiji was invited to give an exposition on any shloka ( stanza ) or two from the Bhagwad Gita. But before he did so, Deshbandhu's eldest daughter, his sister's daughter, and other relatives sang hymns composed by Deshbandhu or his late sister Srimati Amalaa Das. One of the hymns of Deshbandhu is worth reproducing here. He prays to God: "If I cannot have Thy darshan, I shall manage to be content. But grant me this

at least: Let me never cease to feel the pang of the thirst for Thy darshan. Even that is enough for me.

Tho' Thou doth pant for my return  
With hungry eyes, I know,  
I do not ask it, nor pray for  
Thy vision—let them go.  
I feel, I do, that thirst so sweet !  
I only pray to Thee,  
'Quench not my thirst and let the pang  
Always afflict me.'  
Too deep for words I feel this pang,  
Which separation brings;  
How sweet the tears that gush from it !  
How much the heart it wrings !  
I will not mind, if then thou won't  
Wipe them or grant Thy sight ;  
Only let that pang at heart  
Be burning ever bright.<sup>1</sup>

This shows as if his *sadhana* consisted in his desire to keep his yearning for Swaraj ever bright and to let his eyes be ever wet with tears, so long as Swaraj was not obtained.

Here is another hymn :

मिटईओना एई पिपासा  
एई तो आमाय मिष्टि लागे !  
ओगो विरहि, चिर विरहि  
एई तृषा जेनो नित्य जागे ।  
मिल आमि चाईना जे हे  
एई तियासा जेन थाके !  
चोखेर जले एतो मधु  
प्राणबन्धु हे प्राणबन्धु !  
मुछाओ ना चोखेर बारि  
नाई वा एले आंखिर आगे—  
नाई वा होलो मिलन जदि  
एई विरह नित्य जागे !



This is the same tamaala<sup>1</sup> tree  
 That charming tryst, I say,  
 The jewelled necklace where you threw  
 Around my neck that day.  
 The night was dark, the season spring,  
 You whispered words so sweet,  
 They brought forth tears that drenched my breast  
 In love those words to greet.  
 You smothered me with your embrace  
 That very moment ahoy !  
 My pains and pleasures all dissolved  
 In one ethereal joy.  
 But where ? my friend ! I ask, O where ?  
 Are you now gone away ?  
 The shade of this tamaala tree  
 Is wailing, see ! today.  
 Nature, see ! has lost Her cheer  
 The cows, the forest green  
 The earth, the sky, the sprightly deer,  
 Woe-begone and lean.  
 And from my heart wails up the cry  
 Why, my darling ! why  
 Have you robbed me of my smile  
 And tears of love, O why ?''<sup>2</sup>

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1. The tree has dark green leaves.

2.        एई त सेई तमाल तले  
                   मोहन माला दिले गले  
           आदर करे कईले कथा  
                   भिजल माला चोखेर जले !!  
           सेईत सेई माधवी राते  
                   जड़िये निले बुकेर परे  
           सकल सुख सकल व्यथा  
                   गलिये दिले सोहागभरे !  
           आजि बंधु कोथाय तुमि  
                   हाहा करे तमाल तल !

( Continued on next page )

Gandhiji was then asked to say something. He felt 'extreme embarrassment.' A religious discourse from him and that too on Bhagwad-Gita. He began with the expression of that feeling :

@ "I do not feel as a rule embarrassment by difficult situations as they arise. But this afternoon I must confess I feel extremely embarrassed, and if I do so, I do not speak with any degree of pleasure or confidence. Had it not been for this awful calamity and had it not been for Urmiladevi's pressure—which I could not resist—you would not have found me speaking on a solemn occasion like this.

"I was told that on such occasions in the family some one, who could give a religious discourse or a religious man, was called upon to do so. For this occasion the poet was thought of, but he is too weak or too ill to undertake the strain of even a light discourse. Now it was because he could not do so that I was asked to perform a similar duty. I know that I can't do so ; not because I regard this matter as one of comparatively small importance, nor because I hesitate to become a substitute for the poet, but because I do really regard my-self as utterly unfit to speak to you on Gita or Bhagwat—some text from it.

"I speak sometimes at the Ashram ( his own Ashram in Ahmedabad )—especially on modern service—but it is all so totally informal and arising out of the occasions as they arise, that they can't be called religious discourses and are of no permanent value. There I speak to those who are sure to understand me. I am not so sure of my ground here.

"Religion for me is to live it. Religious discourses are necessary for occasions, but not every one who lives it is capable of

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कोथाय गेल मुखेर हासि

कोथाय गेल चोखेर जल !!

सकल शुष्क मरुभूमि

हाहा करे हृदय तल

केन निले प्राणेर हासि

केन निले चोखेर जल !!



interpreting it, much less of delivering a discourse. The converse again is not true. I am not in the habit of giving religious discourses and what can I speak on Gita ?

“That is the one Book of Life for me. Everything I do, I weave round this Book. If I don't find my support from it, I reject it or remain in suspense. However, I have undertaken to speak on the Gita and it must necessarily have its bearing on the event that has brought us together, that is, the mystery of death. Why should death frighten and birth please us ? What is the fundamental distinction between them that two absolutely opposite sensations happen when these two happen ? For the answer, I seek the advice of Bhagwad-Gita. I had to face deaths of dearest ones—as everyone has—parents, friends, comrades. We have all to open the Bhagwad-Gita that explains it in some line or other.

“Now I have always held that death ought not to cause sadness or grief; and if I have shed tears, believe me, I have done so in spite of myself and that it was because of weakness. When I examine that grief, I feel that sorrow on Deshbandhu's death was due to weakness. Let us derive some comfort from Bhagwad-Gita. Bhagwad-Gita is not the recital of a battle between two armies or rival personages. I read from page to page the Mahabharata ( Bhagwad-Gita is an extract from it ) in Yerawda Jail and in reading it I could not see that Gita was really the description of a battle between two rival parties and that the whole discourse was interwoven to convince Arjuna of the rightness of his cause and the profit of engaging in battle. Bhagwad-Gita is not a historical work. It is a deeply religious work with an allegorical meaning, mentioning historical incidents, but having no pretension to being a historical narration. Whoever reads the Adiparva ( Book I ) of the Mahabharata can feel the truth of it. He will have to draw on his credulity until he is frightened. Take *sarpasatra* ( the sacrifice or battle, wherein nagas, meaning a number of cobras or a race of men called Nagas, were immolated ) which refers to a race of people. It had no relation whatsoever to serpents. That is one way of

explaining it analogically. The poet is not a historian. He warns us against taking it in a historical manner.

“Bhagwad-Gita is the description of a duel going on within ourselves and in describing that duel the divine seer or teacher uses some physical facts, which have existence even and which may be proved to be historically true, but his purpose is different. It is to turn the searchlight inward. The second chapter (of the Bhagwad-Gita), immediately you come to its end, shows the hopelessness of the historical position. But if you regard it as a duel, there is then a flood of meaning in it. Arjuna asks to know the signs whereby a steadfast yogi can be recognised. It would be totally out of place to describe a yogi to a man engaged in battle.

“But I have to give you the mystery of death. But if you agree that Bhagwad-Gita is the description of a duel, you will go with me in understanding somewhat the mystery of death. One shloka which has some bearing on what we are just now considering is :

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

“The literal meaning which can be is: ‘That which is unreal has no existence in fact and that which is real never perishes. The deep truth of this is only known by the wise.’

“There are innumerable passages in Bhagwad-Gita which show that the body is the unreal part of ourselves—unreal not necessarily meaning that which is meant by, for example, *maya*, i. e., that which never has been in any sense or form—but it means impermanent, everchanging, fleeting, corruptible. Such a substance is body. And yet strangely all our energies are permanently devoted to the body. We treat it as a permanent thing. We adore it, hug it. All of it is a denial of Hinduism. If one thing is clearly brought out in Hinduism it is the unreality of the body and of things appearing to our eyes and yet among no other body of men than Hindus does death cause such sorrow, grief, lamentation, as amongst Hindus. In the *Mahabharata* the author pictures those who are mourning, but says



that the soul of the dead will suffer, if we cry or mourn, and Bhagwad-Gita has been written as a warning against treating death as a frightening thing.

“Death is but a sleep and a forgetting. Man is soon tired, jaded. He who has watched the agonies would see that the soul would breathe freely as soon as the body is relieved of pain. The more and more I contemplate this life of Deshbandhu, I see that he is now really living. He was partially living when he had the encumbrance of the body.

“We in our selfishness feel the body to be the soul. This in spite of the warning of the Bhagwad-Gita or any sacred book. The one fact more than any other which we realise—I realise daily from my searching the Bhgwad-Gita—is that I must not tarry over what is formal or impermanent; and I regard that moment as wasted which is given to that which is impermanent. That was why I was embarrassed. How can I console them, convince them, that we ought not to grieve? ‘Unreal’ is untruthful. A lie has no substance. It is a phantom. It can’t make a thing real. Shakespeare was wrong. Evil is interred, good lives.

“The world thinks of those who have led noble lives. And it is because the world knows the hidden meaning of words that it treasures noble lives. Rama, although he is my incarnation, I dare swear he must have given way to some weakness in the flesh. We impute perfection to him and Krishna and say he was ‘poornavataṛ’ (perfect descent of God). As men they were liable to error and yet who is there among millions who imputes any imperfection to them?

“This is the explanation of this verse. We want to imitate Deshbandhu. Shall we imitate the formation of his body? We adore the substance and not the body. We, the dearest ones, took the torch and lighted the pyre. The corpse was reduced to its elements and had no meaning. How shall we then get over this *maya*, except by giving our true lives in every walk of life? All through a man’s life, let there be no unreality,

sham, humbug. It is because I recoil from humbug that I never want to speak, but to do the thing. The act will speak unerringly. About speech, about mannerism, there are dangers. Anger is a lie, malice is a lie, jealousy is a lie. The whole brood is a lie. You can perform the *sarpa satra* of these. An embodied snake may hurt my body. But these corrode the whole substance, and even seem to touch the real substance.

"Fortunately, it is never touched. If the experience of all prophets is correct, it never perishes and I would like us all to cherish that reality. And if we understand the mystery of reality, we should understand the mystery of birth and death. Two states of the same body—so many elements put together and then mixing together with the elements. Just as scientists tell us nothing is lost when a candle burns, there is nothing to mourn over when a body dies.

"But there is selfishness. We are enamoured of our own bodies and that is why we mourn. I examined the features of thousands. First I felt irritated. I said, 'What irreverence !' I said, 'How solemn I was ! What ? Is this crowd enjoying a picnic ?' The crowd was right. It had really come on a grand occasion. It had come to write the epitaph, 'Well done', to celebrate the finish of a great career. The crowd had heard of Das as the real bandhu (—friend or brother, Deshbandhu the popular title meant country's friend), the man who had brought a real ray of sunshine in the dark homes of thousands. Their rejoicing was greater than our grief.

"Gita says, therefore : 'Proceed without thinking of the fruit of your results.' If we can contemplate our own lives and of dear friends, we shall never feel unhappy.

"I could not recognise Vasanti Devi. She was a picture of resignation. I forced a smile on my lips and said, 'Would you smile ?' I would far rather that there had been not even that paleness. Did she marry the body ? Two souls attracted to each other for union, for living the beauty of moral life. That union of the body was unreal, but duality will persist. We shall remember that on the 13th day we met to celebrate the



life of a great friend and comrade. Don't weep the tears of unreality. Let us weave every one of his qualities in our lives. Then speech becomes a useless burden. Let it be so with every one of us."

Now is the time which will disclose the degree of our earnestness to preserve Deshbandhu's hallowed memory. It is now that everyone of his followers is put to the test. His mantle as President of the Swaraj Party of Bengal has been thrown on the shoulders of Sri Sen Gupta. No small responsibility that, but the one of keeping the halo of Deshbandhu bright and unsullied is far greater. Let us pray to God to give him the strength to pass through both the tests.

It is easier for those who are not in any responsible position to do their duty by the late Deshbandhu and keep his memory green. A young man who wanted to do so chanced to come up the other day. Amounts, big and small, continue to rain all day for the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund, some send even telegraphic money orders from far away, under the fear that the closing date of the fund may pass away, but this unknown youth did something striking. He laid before Gandhiji 51 rupees, his gold buttons, gold watch, two valuable diamond rings and then bewailed : 'Till Deshbandhu was alive, I spent away my life in a meaningless round of merriment. But to make amends I have now bidden adieu to all my easy-going ways and resolved to keep Deshbandhu's name immortal--alas ! after his death--in my own little way. I have begun to wear Khadi, bought a spinning wheel, started to spin. My articles of luxury are worth about Rs. 5000. If you can get them auctioned, please do; and the money is yours. And I want neither the furniture, nor even my house; I give it away to Vasanti Devi.'" His language and bearing showed he was speaking in a surge of emotion. If this is not a temporary outburst but a sustained aspiration of the heart, can there be a more glorious resolve than this ?

### **Recollections of Deshbandhu**

I have already given my reminiscences of the few days I

was privileged to spend with Deshbandhu. But there are many more typical anecdotes that I have come to know from the literature that is now being published and from my talks with his loved ones. I give some of them here as they deserve preservation.

They all invariably talk of his open-handed charity; but in how many varied channels it flowed freely and flooded them is also worth knowing. Without stopping to think whether the person or the object deserved his liberality, he used to rain money on any and every body whatever his purpose. One cannot help saying that his charity had the madness of a downpour. But 'madness' may not be apposite. Let me then call it 'recklessness.' Yes, he was a dare-devil all over. He would not wince for a moment before throwing himself into a dangerous or momentous action and never have the slightest regret afterwards. How was it possible for him to plunge into the series of his unparalleled sacrifices, if he had been a cold calculator ?

Referring to his habit of never casting a look behind, once he took a great stride forward, his younger brother, Sri Prafullaranjan Das, told me, "When he renounced his practice, I was afraid he would feel very unhappy after a time and wishfully look back to his royal style of living. But when he met me in Patna, I immediately saw I was doing him injustice. For instance, he was extremely fond of drink; so much so that sometimes there were excesses that could only be called orgies. But when I learnt that Dada ( elder brother ) had renounced drink, I realized that he was capable of going to any length in self-sacrifice. He would often talk of the past, but not for once did he recollect the pomp he had renounced. 'Why remember what has once been discarded ?' That was his attitude. Renunciation itself was his chief delight."

But he did smoke even after giving up his practice. In the course of a talk he would often say to Gandhiji : "If you don't mind, I shall go out to please my Goddess Tobacco." But at the time of going to jail he gave up smoking and for good.



After his release, a friend went to see him in the vacation month of June. In the course of a conversation one day, the friend said : "When after your evening meal, you may be smoking your hookah, I shall read you the newspaper." He did not know that Deshbandhu had given up tobacco. Deshbandhu smiled and said : "You don't know, Rakhal, I gave up the hookah long ago. It cost me a lot of trouble—more than any thing else I gave up—but had I not stopped smoking what an ordeal it would have been to me in jail ! To preach renunciation of luxuries to others and take tobacco myself ! Absurd !"

"But now there is no question of going to jail," returned Rakhal Das. "Where's the harm, if you resume your favourite hookah now ?"

"Who told you there is no jail for me any more ?" rejoined Deshbandhu. "Who knows how often I am fated for jail still ? Six or seven times perhaps."

But this was sliding from my talk of his charity into that of his spirit of renunciation. Let me resume and give the various directions in which his liberality flowed—not to encourage the reader to adopt his ways, only a mad man can think of it, but to show a trait of his nature. If a student comes begging for a scholarship, well, he is at once sent back satisfied. If some one wants money for books, all right, let him have it. Whether he was approached for the building of a school or performance of a sacrifice, the request never went unheeded. "Will you give us Rs. 250/- for ghee ( clarified butter ) ? We want to feed *sannyasis* on the Ramakrishna Jayanti (celebration) at our place." Almost before the speaker ended, Deshbandhu would give the amount ! "We want 3000 rupees. A meeting is to be convened to further the cause of Bengali language." "O. K. here they are !" And this stream of charity continued to flow for 3 months even after he gave up his practice. Here is one of the incidents his brother, Sri. Pratullaranjan Das, told me : "We were having a pleasant chat one evening and I was sitting close by him. Incomes the proprietor of 'Vasumati' ( a daily ) and says, 'I am in need of Rs. 50,000/- right

now. I look up to you to help me out of the crisis. If you don't, my institution goes to pieces.' Dada thought for a minute or two, called for his cheque book and gave the man the cheque for the full amount of 50,000 repees ! I was simmering within. After he left, I was furious : "What's this madness ! You don't stop to think and give away such a huge amount to Tom, Dick and Harry who comes to you ! Without taking any security, without even fixing the date of return you sign the cheque outright !" "Now, now !" Dada soothed me, "He is a good man, sorely pressed. If he doesn't return the loan I shall take it that I gave him a gift. And I tell you, never lend, with the hope of return."

For a few days after Deshbandhu's demise an aged Vina-player would regularly come to Gandhiji, sit for a while, drop a tear or two and then walk away. I knew the man, as he had once given Gandhiji a treat of his exquisite proficiency in the art. "What brings you daily here ?" I inquired. The poor man broke down. When he grew a little more quiet, he said only this : "I come to remember Deshbandhu." I narrated the story to Deshbandhu's sister. She said, "Deshbandhu was his patron. He used to give him a hundred and fifty rupees per month for many years and ask him to play the vina before him. He is now very well-off, but is so high-strung that he cannot help coming over here. And now he has lost all his interest in the vina."

And this is what Sri Saatkodipati Rai writes : "Everybody knows of his liberality when he was rolling in wealth. But I joined his service after he became a pauper and it has been my experience, not once but many times, that his charities even in that state surpassed those in affluence. He was not only not afraid to go on giving help to his colleagues—till there was nothing left for the expense of the month—but took a positive delight in falling into such trouble. There is no wonder that Dr. Prafulla Chandra Roy says that the following lines of the Poet Rabindranath fit in with Deshbandhu's nature :



"What can compare with charity ?  
"The cloud," the beggar cries,  
"Squeezes itself to drench the earth  
"For charity it dies."

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From the lives of great men we know that many of them were sons of great mothers. Deshbandhu's mother was compassion incarnate. There are many incidents that show how deeply the son loved the mother. One of them is amusing and another surprising.

During his student days in England he never failed to send a letter to his mother every week. Before leaving for home he thought, 'Now let me give mummy a pleasant surprise. I won't wire to her my departure.' He wrote the weekly letter nevertheless, to tell her that he was happy and gay. He gave a friend that letter and one or two others for posting and then embarked. On arrival he went first to Patna, stayed there for a while and started for home one day. After his departure the host at Patna came to know that the friend in England had forgotten to post the weekly letter and that Deshbandhu had not wired to his mother his departure from there. The host, therefore, sent a telegram to Deshbandhu's mother intimating his expected arrival in Calcutta. At that end the aged mother had already started a fast in absence of the weekly letter ! But the Patna friend's wire relieved her and she was already expecting her son's return. Deshbandhu's playful scheme of a pleasant surprise thus ran astray !

A friend gave me this second instance of his wonderful devotion for his mother. The famous Alipore Bomb Case<sup>1</sup> was then taxing all his energies. He had to keep many vigils even upto 1 or 2 a. m. But in this strenuous preoccupation,

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1. A number of highly educated young Bengalis, with Sri Aurobindo the great mystic, philosopher and poet among them, were charged with murder. Deshbandhu took up their defence free of charge and even against the volleys of Mr. Eardly Norton—one of the ablest lawyers in India—secured the release of Sri Aurobindo and lighter sentences for others.

throughout the period, he did not even once leave for the court without first going upstairs, falling at Mother's feet and taking their dust to his head. That was his faith in the efficacy of Mother's blessings.

With such ardent love and reverence for Mother, it was natural that he was firm in the belief that children should be obedient to their parents and do nothing that went against their wishes. All the members in his family have married out of caste. His eldest daughter also fell in love with a young barrister of a higher caste. The young man too adored her and was very eager to have the marriage solemnized, but his parents were against the match. Deshbandhu told the couple, "Nothing doing. I will never sanction a marriage that offends the parents. Get their approval first and then marry." A long time passed but the consent was not forthcoming. Deshbandhu remained adamant. Only after three years, when the young man succeeded in getting the permission, Deshbandhu gave his daughter in marriage to him.

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Even before his great renunciation (of legal practice in 1921) a perennial stream of spirituality was flowing deep down in him. In a discussion on ancient hymns composed by saints as compared with modern poems, he once remarked, to a friend, "In the old Vaishnava songs, one can scent an ethereal perfume emanating from their personal *dharma-sadhana* (spiritual pursuit). Look into the life of Vijayakrishna Goswami and you will find that it was the Guru's grace that provided him the key to all his *sadhana*. This is more evident in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The biography of Gouranga gave me, as it were, the Call Divine in the heart. If you want to understand Bengal, get into the heart of Gouranga first. That is a must. His unparalleled life and the devotional songs of Chandidas (a mediaeval Vaishnava poet) infused a new life into me. It is my intense aspiration that I too may be informed with such *dharma-sadhana* by the grace of some great religious men."



“But then you will have to give up everything and be a *sannyasi*,” was the friend’s warning comment.

Deshbandhu pooh-poohed it : “Who cares? And, do you know, my horoscope does indicate a good possibility of *sannyasa* ? It is none other than Gouranga who has transformed my life. From wrong company and its attendant ills, there have been many transgressions in my life, but Gouranga, that Love Divine in human form, who never remembered his ego-self, has cleansed me and is cleansing me of all my tresspasses and bad *sanskaras* ( proclivities formed from actions in the past lives and the present ). What a perfect ideal of Divine Love He was ! I think it impossible to get at the secret of *dharma-sadhana* without the aid of a great soul.”

He said all this at Belur Math ( the head-quarter of the sannyasis of the Ramakrishna Order ) when he had gone there at a friend’s instance, to participate in the celebration of a holy day. As he was going from one group of kirtanists to another to listen to the hymns of each, he saw some extraordinary rush at a place and inquired, “What’s happening over there ?” “Oh, they are distributing *prasad* ( sacred food regarded as the concrete grace of a deity ).” He went there. Among those who took the *prasad* were one or two poor Mussalmans and an American missionary. This love-meeting, that knew no distinction of caste or creed, fascinated him. Swami Premanandji ( a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna ) informed the accompanying friend that Deshbandhu’s *prasad* had already been sent to his house. But Deshbandhu demurred : “No. I shall take my *prasad* right here in the company of all these people. Is there any sense in leaving such a place of pilgrimage and going home to take the *prasad* there ?”

His fondness for *kirtan* went on increasing. Only an hour before the attack of his last fatal fever, he was reading his own comparative estimate of Vidyapati ( another mediaeval *bhakta* ) and Chandidas and praising the superhuman and supramental love of the latter. On the next day he remembered his Guru. On the third the curtain fell. Just four days before the end, he

remarked to a friend, "Look here. What an excellent custom prevails in our country ! We take Ramnam or sing *kirtans* when a man dies and his corpse is carried away. I think nothing else possesses as much power as this *kirtan* to overcome everything—evil and disease and sin and sorrow. Many years ago as we were carrying the corpse of a relative, an aged Vaishnavā used to sing lustily :

यादवाय माधवाय गोविन्दाय नमोनमः ।<sup>1</sup>

I have heard many a *kirtan* since, but the feeling persists that I have heard nothing more rapturous than the old man's victorious sky-rending, cry of यादवाय नमोनमः । Was this talk but a shadow of the coming event ?

Gandhiji has already described in his article 'In Darjeeling'<sup>2</sup> what sweetness and spiritual consciousness possessed Deshbandhu in the last days of his life. The following sentiments belong to the same period. I shall finish this article with a quotation from the collection of anecdotes noted down by Deshbandhu's right-hand man Sri Sat Kodipati Roy. Two days before he left for Darjeeling ( his last journey on earth ) he remarked to the latter: 'See this. Mahatmaji has no enemy and I have so many. What's the reason ? Only now I understand that nobody does violence to the Mahatma, because there is no violence in his heart. I am sure my heart is filled with violence and that is why I have so many enemies.'

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Gandhiji's letter to Shuaib Kureshi ( a Nationalist Muslim and sometime editor of Gandhiji's 'Young India' during his jail period in 1922 ).

@ "All you say about Hindu-Mussalman quarrels is too true. I am following the course adopted by the Prophet's companions in Usman's time. They withdrew to the caves when Islam was split up into rival factions. We may figuratively

1. Bows and bows again to Yaadava, Maadhava, and Govinda ( all names of Lord Sri Krishna ).

2. See Appendix II-5.



retire into ourselves, whilst the two may be fighting like cats and dogs."

16-7-1925

Letter to C. Rajagopalachariar :

@ "My dear C. R.

"Somehow or other I need your letter to feel that all is well with you. My position is this. My body and mind are living in a world by which I remain unaffected, but in which I am being tried. My soul is living in a world physically away from me and yet a world by which I am and want to be affected. You are a part of that world and perhaps the nearest to me. My innermost being wants your approbation of what I am doing and thinking. I may not always succeed in getting it, but it craves for your verdict.

"Now you understand exactly why I want to hear from you apart from many other reasons. You must let me have, if it is only a post card every week. Mahadev, Devdas ( Gandhiji's youngest son ), Pyarelal ( who succeeded Mahadevbhai to the secretaryship of Gandhiji ) should keep you posted with what is going on.

"And you must keep well.

"Your *sadhana* is the development of the place where you are and a scientific test of our theory of the value of hand-spinning. Even if it proves untrue in the end, neither we nor the world will have lost anything; for I know that we are true in the sense that we have full faith in the programme. And if it is intrinsically not immoral, our theory can be claimed to be true, when a fairly large number of villages sustain hand-spinning and Khadi without protection, as the whole of India sustains home-cookery without protection.

"Surely this is a long introduction to what I want to say.

"Here is Pitt's<sup>1</sup> letter and the letter from Kellapan. I am simply saying that we must keep nominally a *satyagraha* at the

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1. Chief Inspector of Police in the Travancore State where a *Satyagraha* was being fought for free use to untouchables of public roads around the walled courtyard of the temple there. Sri Kellapan was a foremost leader of the *Satyagraha*.

eastern gate unless the local men think otherwise. But you may come to other conclusion. You should write to Kellapan. He seems to be a nice useful man."

This Bengal tour ( of Gandhiji ) went on extending from one month to two and so on, till now it has already come to four. Many important events have happened during the period. There are many who impatiently inquire : "How long is Gandhiji going to stick on to Bengal ? And what's the earthly use of all that ?" Some friends even go to the length of grumbling, "If Gandhiji confines himself to one place and one object only, his first love—Khadi—will suffer by neglect." Behind this fear lies the view that Gandhiji is spending away all his energies after the one work of collecting 10 lakhs of rupees for the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. If people can assess properly the situation that has arisen in the wake of Deshbandhu's demise, they will easily appreciate his prolonged stay in Bengal. And if they can see the other activities that march shoulder to shoulder with the one of collecting the Deshbandhu Fund, they will have no cause to fear a set-back in Khadi work.

As the first action in payment of his funeral tribute to Deshbandhu, Gandhiji put his service at the disposal of the Swarajists for as long a time as they wanted. The climax of that service was reached on the day when in the presence of many Swarajists Gandhiji himself sponsored the proposal that Pandit Motilalji and others might be freed from the obligation imposed on them by the Spinning Franchise Resolution passed at the Belgaum Congress in 1924. ( Under the resolution every one was required to contribute 2000 yards of yarn every month in order to remain a Congressman. ) The Maharashtrians were the first and the last in the whole country to get tired of the spinning franchise, as well as the first and the last to demand its removal. Was it possible for Gandhiji to refrain from placating them ? But that word '*placating*' hurt Sri Kelkar, the leader of the Maharashtrians. "Whom do we '*placate*' ?" he protested; "a fool, an idiot or a wicked man. Are Maharashtrians any of these ?" He had raised this same objection at



that historic meeting itself and has now repeated it in his paper, 'The Mahratta.' It is a matter of regret that Gandhiji's explanation at the meeting did not convince him. People 'placate' the three classes referred to by him only out of weakness—when they feel they are no match for them. Is Gandhiji the man to 'placate' an idiot or a wicked man out of weakness? The accusation of Sri Kelkar, therefore, does injustice both to Gandhiji and to himself. Gandhiji, on the other hand, had clearly stated at that meeting: "Without the support of you, Maharashtrians, no programme can be successfully carried out. It is because I have the fullest appreciation of your loyalty to the Congress, of your strength and compact organisation, that I wish to placate you." I am certain Sri Kelkar will accept the propriety of the use of that word 'placating' soon or late.

But satisfying the Maharashtrians was not the only object behind Gandhiji's suggestion. It had become his duty to see that the Swaraj Party did not collapse as a result of Deshbandhu's demise. The shock, moreover, of the insult hurled by Lord Birkenhead<sup>1</sup> succeeded that of Deshbandhu's death. It was thus many things that contributed to that final step of Gandhiji. But his proposal to withdraw the spinning franchise was for keeping intact the Swaraj Party in India as a whole. There was also the local Swaraj Party to be looked after. Deshbandhu was three-in-one, leader of the Swaraj party, leader of the Swarajists in the Bengal Legislative Council, and Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation. Who should fill up all the three posts in order to maintain their old power and prestige, as all these three positions were strengthening one another? By helping the Swarajists in their choice of a leader who could step into Deshbandhu's shoes in all these three positions, Gandhiji had to invite upon himself a hornet's nest of comments, favourable or otherwise, just or unjust.

And can Gandhiji put up with Bengal's failure to complete the 10 lakhs for the Deshbandhu Fund, once that figure was fixed

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1. See Appendix III, Vol. VI

as the target ? It was, therefore, resolved to stay on in Bengal and leave no stone unturned for collecting those ten lakhs. But can the work of collection mean only actual collection and nothing more ? A friend remonstrated : "You may devote yourself to that work, but, mind you, it will be only at the cost of Khadi work." "But why at that cost ?" Gandhiji immediately rejoined. "You are yourself a living propaganda of Khadi. Khadi is sure to follow you like a shadow wherever you go. How can Khadi propaganda suffer then ?" It is with this unflinching determination that Gandhiji<sup>1</sup> engrossed in the collection of 10 lakhs. Small amounts stream in by themselves but Gandhiji has to go out to big people for getting substantial contributions. Can anybody imagine Gandhiji going to them without his *takli* with him ? That is how, whenever he meets Indian princes and rich businessmen, the subject of Khadi crops up in his casual chats with them and Khadi propaganda is carried on without any ado. Can any other circumstance give him this happy chance ? That was how Gandhiji gave even a lesson in *takli*-spinning to the Maharani of Narajole at Midnapore and secured from her a pledge to spin daily.

Khadi propaganda is thus silently going on side by side with the work of collection. But it would be surprising if Gandhiji tarries so long in Calcutta and Englishmen do not meet him. 'The Englishman' as well as 'The Statesman' wrote articles upon articles condemning Gandhiji for his strong advocacy of Sri Sen Gupta for the Mayoralty of Calcutta. And then one or two Englishmen even saw Gandhiji personally. Consequently, they arranged a meeting with him at the Grand Hotel for the sole purpose of getting from him a clarification for his strong support of Sri Sen Gupta.

But the word 'Englishmen' is not accurate here. Besides Englishmen there are other Europeans, who are members of the inviting body, the European Association. This first public meeting with them was held on 24. 7. 1925. Only the members of the Association were present and the subject of discussion was confined to the one question of the choice of the Mayor.



Gandhiji had hardly any former occasion in India to speak to such a large number of Englishmen. They were all very polite and gentlemanly and there was nothing wanting in the respect they accorded him, either at the reception or at the farewell they gave him. The subject definitely limited but Gandhiji did not let slip any opportunity to cross the limit, whenever there was a relevant chance to do so. At the very outset he stated: "Even when the tide of non-co-operation was at its highest, an English friend remarked in a quip, 'But you are a co-operator at heart !' And I readily admitted I was. And today also I am standing before you as a co-operator to tell you I am pining for co-operation if it is in any way possible."

He then gave his reasons for his choice of Sri Sen Gupta and disclosed some things that lay behind the curtain. Not only was Sri Sen Gupta the inevitable choice of Swarajists, but even Maulana Azad had backed him on the ground that his appointment would highly gratify the Mussalmans, while some other Hindu might not meet with their approval. And there was nobody in the Muslim world who could command unanimous support. Sri Sen Gupta besides was the leader of the Swaraj Party within and without the Council. His selection as the Mayor was essential in interests of the Swaraj Party.

After so much clarification Gandhiji requested the European friends to discuss the matter. They did not mince matters in condemning the action, but did so in a perfectly parliamentary language. However, Gandhiji's gentle and yet brave attitude evident in his reply had its effect on them. The President of the Association had characterised the whole affair as nothing but a political intrigue. Instead of rebutting the charge, Gandhiji quoted parallel examples from the world's history. He reminded them of what happened in England on such occasions; he pointed out that Sir Pherozshah, the then foremost political leader in Bombay, was made the Mayor and he adorned the position so well that even Englishmen admired his achievements. The same was true of the two other political fighters, the brothers Vithalbai ( V. J. Patel, first Indian

'President of the Central Legislative Assembly, who was also for a time the Mayor of Bombay ) and Vallabhbhai ( Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel the Satyagrahi leader who rendered yeoman services as President of the Ahmedabad Municipality ). Quoting all these examples he showed how it was but practical politics that impelled him to make the choice of Sri Sen Gupta. The next day both those papers, "The Englishman" and "The Statesman" wrote articles on Gandhiji that showed that all their anger against him had evaporated. They admitted they could appreciate Gandhiji's stand and even admired his heroism in presenting himself before avowed opponents to plead his case.

Addressing the meeting of the Temperance Association held under the presidency of the Director, Gandhiji said :

@ "Mr. Bose has referred to me in connection with my service to the cause of temperance. Many do not know that before I worked in the political field, I was out and out a social reformer and a worker—a strenuous worker in temperance—in distant South Africa in the midst of the Western people of that Continent. My experience of indentured labourers converted me finally to temperance, to complete prohibition.

"It is my conviction that of all countries India is pre-eminent fit and ready for complete prohibition and for the simple reason that Hinduism and Islam predominate in India and they prohibit use of liquor. Some may demur about Hinduism, but I assert that in Hinduism there is no warrant for intemperance as there is none for untouchability. If votes were taken of the millions of India, I have no doubt that a vast majority will be cast for complete prohibition. Grant me leave to speak here that among the many reforms we wanted to try in 1921, this great reform which was very nearly completed fell through not only because of the criminal negligence of the Government, but largely because of the method of violence introduced in picketing. I was obliged to suspend picketing. But I don't want to go into picketing. I am working amongst the mill-workers of Ahmedabad with specially the assistance of



Anasuya and Shankarlal Banker, or precisely, I am working to help them as they are the pioneers. I am only an adviser. I am here to tell you from my own experience that women have done their best to wean their husbands from this curse.

"I am told by friends that it is possible to drink temperately. My experience is contrary. Some of them who drink think that they drink moderately. But what is the result ? He forgets the distinction between mother and daughter. I recall a baker's wife who was alarmed as nightfall came. She was a widow with husband living. Her husband was a model husband before drink, but forgot wife and children afterwards.

"What shall we do ? The Government will not forego the revenue from this cursed traffic. Ministers say, 'Yes, we will do it, but get us the revenue which will be lost'. If we argue like that, we can never get out of drink. As you are aware, liquor-houses are built where they are not required. Liquor is thus imposed on an unwilling people.

"The name itself signified that this is not an exciting subject. Even the excitement of the name of a Mahatma will not draw an audience for a subject dull as intemperance. But immediately the curse of drink permeates the agricultural population, we will be ruined. And even young men are taking to drink.

"A friend told me today of a conversation she had with students at 2 A. M. She advised them, "Exercise your independent judgment." They said they had no conscience. I do not say they were drunk. But today we take pride in the fact that we cannot exercise independent judgment. That way lies perdition. When Satan wants to tempt us, he dangles red water before us. Let us beware of it. But what will you do with reference to these countrymen ? Whilest we are engaged in a big campaign of prohibition, let us do something. Go once a week to these dens and face these people and their kicks and if we have done our part, we shall have laid the foundation of a whirlwind campaign against the Government—non-violent of

course. I hope those interested will not be satisfied with talking but go to the root of the matter."

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"There' is no doubt that the planchette is the cause of today's trouble. When she felt such a terrible shock at.....(A)'s death, one cannot conceive how much more she must have felt after meeting him (A) through the planchette. Add to this the remark of.....(B) that she did not attend properly on A in his death-bed. I know of such a plight of many a spiritualist. Those who catch that craze have become almost totally useless. I have already given you the tragedy of.....(C). These manipulations (of the planchette) deserve to be given up lock, stock and barrel. I have serious doubts about the future of.....(D) also. He will be lost if he imbibes the habit. Look at even E! What a pure and stainless heart he has! But you cannot hope for anything from one even like him, if he yearns for meeting with his Guru through a planchette. I have come to know of women who enjoy sensuality with their deceased husbands in this way. That is why for the practice of Yoga, one has to keep aloof from such attempts. It is not impossible to carry on illicit intercourse, but it deserves to be shunned altogether. Of such experiments also the same may be said. The only proper course for a soul encased in a body is to strive for self-realization, only so far as it is possible through the instrumentality of his body. Crossing this limit and getting in contact with ghosts through such experiments is nothing but prostitution of a kind."

The missionaries also were then impelled to invite Gandhiji to speak before them. As a result of the articles (in the 'Englishman' and 'The Statesman') referred to above, many Englishmen attended this meeting and it may as well be called the cause of the meeting of 18th August. This meeting of the missionaries, held on 28.7.1925, owes its exceptional importance to Gandhiji's speech there. Gandhiji gave a memorable speech to a missionary gathering in Darjeeling, when he was a guest

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1. The manuscript diary does not show with reference to whom this remark of Gandhiji has been made.



of the late Deshbandhu Das. But there was a distinct difference in the tenor of that speech and this. Though both were delivered at missionary meetings, the former was very friendly in tone. He did make some adverse comments, but only in passing and in a brotherly spirit. That was so because in Darjeeling a missionary sister had humbly requested Gandhiji to elucidate to them the message of Jesus Christ. It was no wonder that his criticisms there were only a casual and unimportant part of the speech. But this second speech was delivered before a gathering of missionaries who were apt to pass severe strictures on Gandhiji. That speech, therefore, took an entirely different colour. Let me give its substance in my own words.

At the outset Gandhiji gave the history of his contact with missionaries. "Far back since 1888, I have been in contact with you. In South Africa, when the atmosphere around me was all full of hostility, those who kept up close contact and friendship with me were missionaries chiefly. Naturally, I had many talks with them and some of them would often ask me why I should not join their fold. After a long and close cross-examination one of them gave me up and we parted with the feeling :

"We shall know each other better  
When the mists have rolled away."

"When I came to India, I continued to meet the shining lights among Christians in order to keep my promise to those friends. One of the foremost was Mr. Kalicharan Bannerjee. The circumstances under which I met him were exceptionally favourable. His wife, or some relative, was at a lingering sick-bed. The time was at once opportune and convenient for him to explain to me, with perfect composure and length, my duty to embrace Christianity. But he could not move me an inch from my position and today also it remains the same. And not without reason. For, my loving contact with Bhagwad Gita and the Upanishads is inborn and ordained. The Sermon On the Mount is the purest and noblest revelation in the Bible. That exhortation, that vital message to man, I hold in very high esteem. But I have no hesitation in freely and frankly avowing

before you that whenever clouds have gathered thick in my mind and there has been every sign of the storm of despair and doubt bursting upon me, it is not the Sermon On the Mount but the Bhagwad Gita and the Upanishads to which I have rushed for refuge and strength,—and, as naturally, as a baby would to its mother. And never in vain. I have invariably got an uplifting, a saving, *shloka* from them. As that is my uniform experience, how is it possible for me to detach myself from my burning love for both of them and Hinduism?

“But I didn't stop short at my innate love for Hinduism. I started the study of all religions—read the Quran, the Zand Avestha, and even the gospels of the Jews. But the total effect of all this reading came to this : All the religions are right in their own way, but are all imperfect also—‘imperfect’ because we interpret the principles of all of them with our warped intelligence. There are plenty of expositions on the texts of every religion. Open one such theological work and you find something; and then another and it says something else. Even the Gita—even the Upanishads—are not free from varying interpretations. All these interminable discussions and hair-splitting expositions exhausted my patience; I was disgusted, ran away from them as misguiding mazes and said to myself, ‘My dear good fellow ! This heavy wine of philosophical disputations will lead you nowhere. Cling to only that in the gospels which touches your heart. Shed your egotism, be a baby, a weakling, and surrender at the feet of the Lord of your Heart.’ The essence of our religious books can be boiled down into the simple adage : ‘*Nirbala ke bala Ram*, ( God is the strength of the helpless and weak<sup>1</sup> ). And all those who are innocent of theological lore have been taking refuge in that faith only.

“Millions, nay, tens of millions, of people thus receive their consolation from Hinduism in the way I do. When that was the situation, you happened to come in. And what did you do ?

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1. A quotation from one of the hymns of Suidas ( a blind mediaeval sage ).



You simply put us down for athiests, poured vile epithets upon us as 'heathens.' But Bishop Heber was the limit. He sang :

'Though every prospect pleases  
And only man is vile.'<sup>1</sup>

"And then many succeeding generations of Christians incorporated that song in their prayers, sang it repeatedly and

1. The Gujarati Diary gives the whole hymn in English for the reader's edification. It is reproduced here :

From Greenland's icy mountains,  
From India's coral strand,  
Where Africa's sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand;  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain.  
What though the spicy breezes  
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle  
Though every prospect pleases  
And only man is vile;  
In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strewn,  
The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.  
Can we whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny ?  
Salvation, oh. Salvation !  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till each remotest nation  
Has learn'd Messiah's name.  
Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,  
And you, ye waters ! roll,  
Till like a sea of glory  
It spreads from pole to pole;  
Till over our ransom'd nature  
The Lamb for sinners slain  
Redeemer, King, Creator  
In bliss returns to reign.

thus affixed an ineffaceable seal on their contempt for us. But I say 'This is NOT an athiestic land. Here, on the contrary, you will have godly vision in the hutments of the poorest, in the dens of Dheds, of Mahaars, of Namshudras ( all 'untouchable' communities ). A Brahmin or a Non-Brahmin, a Kshatriya ( warrior caste ), a Vaishya ( merchant ), a Shudra ( servant )—everyone you will find receiving consolation from Hinduism. And you will find Brahmins who see God in the service of the so-called untouchables. Men of such self-sacrifice you can't see anywhere else. I ask you to know this country better, be more in tune with it. Don't move about with ears stuffed and eyes closed. And this above all. Go round the country with all the doors of your heart thrown open. Then, I assure you, you will find this a Godly land. If only you move about here to learn and not to teach, you will find countless things to learn. I assure you, if Jesus descended on the earth today, he would accept as his disciples hundreds of men and women who have never heard of His message, nor even of His name. Do not, I pray, stick to the letter, catch the spirit of your Scriptural texts.

"Is it right that I should tell you all this ? I wonder. I visited a monastery in South Africa where all the Fathers were keeping silence. I asked the Father Superior the reason. His explanation has been indelibly carved in my memory. He said, "How can we hear the still small voice, if we go on speaking ? Is it not better to keep silence and be absorbed in listening to it ?" When I think of it, I ask myself, 'Why am I loosening my tongue before you like this ?' Something tells me forcefully, 'I had better not say these things to you.' But the words escaped my lips in the flush of the moment. All I intended to say was only this : 'You cannot serve India, unless you understand her. Know the people of the country, their customs and manners, and try to be one with them.' I remind you of the advice Lord Salisbury gave to a deputation that had come all the way from China to secure the aid of British arms. He said, he was surprised; 'You want to deliver the message of Christ and have come to temporal power for protection ! Not so the



missionaries of old, who gloried in the strength of the Christ. If you must go there, you must take all the risks God-fearing men must take.' They were words of truth and wisdom. If you want also to serve the people of India, go out with only God as your refuge and, like heroes who reck their lives as naught, be His true servants. For the missionaries in India also, I have felt that many of them have forgotten the true spirit of service and consider that their interests would be served best, if they behave as members of the ruling race and flaunt themselves under the protecting umbrella of British rule.

"In short, I beg of you not to produce figures. If anybody wants from you a history of your progress, don't tell him that you have converted so many heads. Show him how much of the people's distress you were able to relieve, how much you could identify yourselves with them in their joys and sorrows. I am compelled to say with regret, that you have not cultivated the habit of putting the substance above the shadow and the attitude of being one with the people. You have not kept the doors of your heart open. Gain that moral power and develop it. And so, God help us !"

The President then announced that Gandhiji would answer questions put to him. Many questions were asked—all of them couched in polite language and with a true spirit of inquiry. Some of them did disclose excitement, but that was natural.

One of the questions was, "Jesus Himself has commanded us to go out to the world and spread His Gospel. It is a crime to disobey His command." Gandhiji answered the question by quoting the same Bible which said also that the spirit saved and the letter killed the Law.

A gentleman asked Gandhiji, "What is the chief work missionaries should take up ?"

Gandhiji : "I didn't want to refer to the spinning wheel, but you have compelled me with a pointed question, and I have but to say that the spread of the spinning wheel is your chief work. (Showing the hollow tube he had with him). See this

which I carry wherever I go. It contains my eyes (spectacles), but it contains something more precious, my takli, my whirligig. Through it I take the massage of God to Indians. According to Sir William Hunter, one-tenth of the population is living on stale bread and a pinch of salt. Ever since in the summer capital of Orissa which is under the shadow of the Lord of Universe (i. e. at Jagannathpuri, which means the town of the Lord of the Universe), I saw arranged for my edification famine-stricken people—rows of skin and bone—the resolve was made up once for all that those people should be shown the value of labour. For that there is only one means—the spinning wheel—which everyone can take up in the seven hundred thousand villages of this vast country, 1900 miles long and 1500 broad. I remember General Booth in this connection. He said, 'When a man comes to me, I give him a plate of soup; and if he wants another, he should work. I give him then chips of work.' I honour Booth for having taught dignity of labour. It is in order to teach that dignity of labour that I put the spinning wheel before the poor and the rich, the young and the old. That was why I said to men like Lord Reading and Lord Willingdon that if they loved this country, they and their officers down to their doorkeepers should wear Khadi. Machinery will never go to the 7 lakhs of villages of India. Sam Higginbotham's book avers that even in scientifically developed America they are trying to find out a supplementary occupation, in order to fill their poor men's mouths, not with doles but self-respecting labour. It is sinful to dole out charity. It is necessary for you to teach them to work. They are men of little faith. Put faith in them and prevent them from being parasites. I have no hesitation in affirming that this takli—that is the spinning wheel—is the secret of my hold of the masses."

A missionary : "What should missionaries do to identify themselves with the mind of the masses ?"

Gandhiji : "It is difficult to answer the question. But if I can



put it in a word, 'Follow in the footsteps of Charlie' Andrews'."

Another missionary got up and questioned Gandhiji in a tone of high excitement. He said : "I am not talking today of the historical Jesus. I am talking of that eternal Jesus, the Son of God, and ask Gandhi, 'Have you experienced that everlasting, ever awake Jesus in your life ?'"

Gandhiji : "If you are speaking of the historical Jesus, I must state that I do not experience spiritual consciousness in my life through that Jesus. But if by Jesus you mean the eternal Jesus, if by Jesus you understand the religion of universal love that dwells in the heart, then that Jesus lives in my heart—to the same extent that Krishna lives, that Rama lives. If I did not feel the presence of that living God, at the painful sights I see in the world, I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be the Hooghli ( river ). As, however, that Indweller shines in the heart, I have not been a pessimist now or ever before."

This speech also had great repercussions. At the end of it, one European sister, from top to toe in Khadi, came to Gandhiji and said, "You will meet at least one European in Khadi." "No, there are many other sisters," replied Gandhiji. And before he ended he was surrounded by some other Khadi-clad sisters.

That was the prelude to the calls of many missionaries and discussions with them on a number of questions. The Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. ( Young Men's Christian Association ) requested Gandhiji to speak before them and Gandhiji has agreed to do so. A missionary or two felt that Gandhiji's criticism of Bishop Heber's song was rather too strong, but a member of this Y. M. C. A. who accompanied the Secretary

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1 C. F. Andrews was at first a Professor in a Christian College, but finding the attitude of the mission too sectarian, left it and joined Tagore's University, Shanti Niketan, and then became a selfless champion of Indian labour in India and abroad. He had gone to South Africa also to help Gandhiji. His saintly character prompted Gandhiji to call him a White Rishi ( sage ). People called him 'Deshbandhu' (=friend of the poor) also

admitted frankly that all his criticisms and suggestions were perfectly in order.

Attracted by accounts of these meetings an Anglo-Indian gentleman, Dr. Moreno, came to see Gandhiji and appealed to him to give some message to his community. Though that speech delivered on 29. 7. 1925 was addressed to a very small minority, it turned out to be one of great significance. The tone and manner of that speech had a distinction that was lacking in the addresses before the European Association and the missionaries. The latter two had for their audiences respectable and proud associations and there was some stiffness in tone. They were formal and carefully weighed. But the speech before the Anglo Indians—a numerically petty community, hemmed in in a thousand ways by adverse circumstances—was more an open-hearted informal talk than a public speech and was dripping with sympathy and the wish to rush to the rescue of the weak and afflicted.

@ This is what he said :

"I am glad to speak before a beautifully compact meeting. I would like to clear the ground by taking up the question of 'the badge of loyalty being the pride of your community' as the president called it. I appreciate his point of view. There was a time when I too could conscientiously applaud loyalty. But, as you know, for the last 6 years I have not been speaking of loyalty, but of disloyalty. It is not as if I harbour disloyalty against any one, but I do so against all untruth, all that is evil. I don't want to sail under false colours. Loyalty is due only so long as the institution conduces to my growth. I cannot say that I am loyal to the present system. I am every moment of my life seeking to destroy this system which is a shame both to its agents and victims.

"While, therefore, we may agree to differ in this matter, we should try to find out whether there are no points of contact between you and me, between you—and if I can say so—and the masses of this beautiful land. What the ultimate destiny of India will be, we do not know. At the most we can say it is in



our making. It will be as we—all those who are destined to live here together—want it to make. But we cannot say anything beyond this, we cannot control the lives of the millions who inhabit this land. But every one should be an optimist, every one should be able to say I live for this land, die for this land. I want you to tap that question in a spirit of service. If you do so, you will forget the painful difference in views. When one's heart is set on service, the question of loyalty or disloyalty loses its significance.

“I have come here today in a spirit of utter humility, absolute friendship and goodwill towards you. During my incessant wandering I have come into contact with all sorts and conditions of people. I have made myself not only accessible to every one, but have gone out of my way to search out minorities. It is my duty to seek out minorities. The biggest minority is that of the Mussalmans and as a representative of India's majority, I think it my duty to earn their friendship, even if they do not follow my advice. But you do not occupy that numerical position. I have, therefore, never shrunk from meeting you, whenever there was a chance. I am here to confess that Anglo-Indians have not freely reciprocated that feeling.

“My largest contact with them has been on railway trains. They have avoided public meetings, as they think they are disloyal if they attended them. They have thus kept themselves away as they have made loyalty their creed—though there was no reason for it. On the train it was inevitable for me to see them.

“I shall give an instance to show completely aloof from Indians, Anglo-Indians have made themselves. I have not hesitated to go over to the youngsters, whenever there was a chance. Some school students got into my compartment from Ajmer. I kept listening to the incessant epithets they were using for me. ‘This must be some barbarous man, undressed, ill-dressed, a sadhu ( recluse ) or a loafer.’ For a short time I was repelled. ‘Fruit,’ I then thought, ‘might serve as a common bond.’ I offered and one lad took the fruit. Conversation then

started. The boys had heard of Mahatma Gandhi and so became friends. But I saw them in their naturalness. After they recognised me they put on manners and when a man puts on manners, you know how unnatural it becomes. Their language was unparliamentary. One of the boys was very fond of Indian sweets. He admitted, "I take only when no one sees." So he learns to isolate himself from his own countrymen. He has Indian blood, of which he has reason to be proud, but if he receives that reminder he is pained.

"Here is another experience. A fine young man opened his heart out to me. He said, "Although I am getting 400 rupees per month, I don't expect to leave anything for my children. I have done 15 years' service, but saved hardly anything I am living above my means, as I must look a European every inch of me. I told you all this, but I could not do so to a European."

"I was stabbed, when I heard this. I said to myself, 'This is doing violence to humanity—all for a little money—all for keeping up unnecessary style. He was a Christian. There was nothing wrong in his demeanour. In spite of surface polish there was the canker eating into his vitals. This is not true life.

"I gave you two telling illustrations. What will you do? Will you attempt the impossible or shall you be what you are?

"And let me say this. In South Africa, in Australia, in any part of the British Empire, the same thing is in store for you as for me. You would be classed as coloured men and have no place in society. Those of you who have white skin will be welcome, but your relatives may betray you and you are done for. The same is the case with the Dutch. Their statesmen are hard put to it as to what to do with this problem. You also are moral lepers there. Everyone's gorge rises at our sight. Dr. Malan may say he will not drive out the coloured, but he would starve them and compel them to emigrate from South Africa. He would practise hypocrisy double-distilled. Go to England. I have noticed what can happen. There also the bar sinister applies to you and me, as Lord Morley points out. It



is your privilege to fight this. If you throw in your lot with the manes from whom you have sprung, there is hope for me, you, and even for the Government to which you think you are bound.

“Then you can become a bridge, a level bridge, on which all Englishmen and Indians and you, Anglo-Indians, may pass to and fro without feeling any degree of discomfort.

“But if you aspire after the heights of Simla, you will cut a dismal figure. In that case a brave, resourceful, and advanced community will be going to perdition, because it would have to make the impossible attempt to ape Europeans. You will isolate yourselves from the people of India, both Indians and Europeans will cut every connection with you.

“Traces of it are still to be found. I have been a witness to it. I am talking of an Anglo-Indian barrister in Kathiawar. He refuses to see his parents. In his office no one may see him. He is fond of chess, Hawannah cigars, wines, etc. He gets practice and invitations from the Political Agent and invitations to dance. In my own days I have attended these parties. Another Anglo-Indian, an Inspector of Education, was also there. These two were a miserable couple. All avoided them—Europeans and Indians. The picture of that tragedy still rises before me.

“I have given you many anecdotes. In this critical period of our life, you have to make your choice, whether you want to cast your lot with Indians or with Europeans. Let it be borne in mind that I don't ask you to cut yourselves away from Englishmen. Englishmen are far more precious to me today than they were. Because I am now leading the most national life. In those days I was opting for a foreign culture. Despicable things guided my life then. I threw them into the Indian Ocean, turned my back on them. I said to myself, ‘I won't have their life, won't consent to become what Sidgwick calls, ‘the blotting sheet of civilisation.’ I was then seeking the surface, but now I have gone to the root of the matter. I have, therefore, become more lovable, more approachable—for the reason

that I have discarded everything put up. Bluntness is better than put-up courtesy. Let us merge ourselves in the masses, so that we can show to the world a wonderful species of Indian humanity, each community keeping its natural character, each shedding all unnaturalness and so living as a harmonious unit. If you think it that way, it is at once your duty and your right to make the attempt.

“I have till now dealt with your duty. You may, naturally, wish to know mine. If I became the Viceroy of India—I know I am never going to be, but suppose I became—I would give you the choice. I would tell you ‘Take what you want.’ I would call the leaders of all the parties and tell them the same thing. I would ask you, the least numerically, to come first and declare your demands. I would then call upon other communities to do the same, so that the demands may not become inexorable. But I would make one condition. I would want every community to give me their best men. I will then tell all these candidates—I will set this decent examination test—‘How much of a man or a woman you are. Have you got the ability to rise to the occasion?’ From all those that pass that test of efficiency, I would give preference to all minorities along the justest lines, consistently with the welfare of India. That is not linguistic jugglery, so that only Hindus can come in, but I *mean* consistently with the welfare of India. I would not flatter you or pamper you, but certainly give you your due.

“Should I have some such thing by legislation? I say ‘no’, for that will always mean the necessity of a third party between us. I told the same thing to Mussalmans. In South Africa I said to Smuts the same thing. ‘If you say, only one Indian may give fingerprints under legislation, I say, no. By mutual understanding—voluntarily—all of us,’ and I won. If we have lost in South Africa today, it is because we have lost the power to negotiate on equal terms and remove legal disabilities. You must have protection, but by a voluntary pact between you and me. You know, there is a pact between me and Swarajists. They are in honour bound to act according to the pact. You must have such



protection by voluntary agreement, so long as you have not sufficient faith in the majorities' sense of justice. Those who sign it are bound to honour the terms of the pact. If they treat such agreements as scraps of paper, you will cut off the head of the man who gives the promise. When masses do not carry out sacred promises, you may have your revenge on them. You may do anything conceivable.

"I don't think I have wearied you. I have dissected my heart. What I have said has come out unpolished – in a perfect spirit. May you receive it in a perfect spirit."

Gandhiji then declared that he would answer questions put to him. Dr. Moreno was the first to begin :

@ Q : "If in your scheme of Indianisation Anglo-Indians are adversely affected, what would be your attitude ?"

A : "I would drive out not a single Anglo-Indian, if I had power in my hands."

Q : "You have made over the Congress to Swarajists. And yet you talk of an all-party programme ! How can we engage in obstructionist tactics ?"

A : "Made over ? No. I have said I have absolved them from the Pact. It means that every member can exercise his judgment in respect of franchise. No political resolution could be brought forward formerly. Now they would be able to do so. There is nothing like handing over. I have only said it would be a predominantly political body and not a Swarajist body. Today they are predominant, because others have kept back. It means also, I have not inflicted the *takli* on you and have thus facilitated your entry into the Congress. If Swarajists out-number you, it is because you have not the organisation that can oppose them. So it all now becomes a matter of simply who wants the Congress. You referred to the obstructionist tactic. Well, it is wrong and it is right—according to the right or wrong reaction to the situation. If co-operation serves the purpose they will do it. But how are you to react on Swarajists unless you go to the Congress and react on them ?"

Q : "How could you grant proportional representation and expect us to agree, when we have already an abnormally large representation ?"

A : "I should resist all reference to statutory representation. I would say all who are members must be duly elected by voters. But before I draw up the Swaraj Scheme, I would ask you what you want. After arriving at an agreement, the document will be publicly registered. Having done that we will elect a Committee that will draft a Constitution. But you will ask, 'How are you to ensure the election of a single Anglo-Indian ( without any statutory reservation ) ?' This is my answer. For the time being elections will be managed by parties. You can get a Congress ticket. Of course, we presuppose sensible public opinion and honesty. If we haven't, we are not going to get Swaraj."

Q : "Why did you not put your signature to the Commonwealth of India Bill of Mrs. Annie Besant ?"

A : "I have said that if I get a cable from Lord Birkenhead that if I signed, the demand of Mrs. Besant would be granted, I would give my signature. But I will not add to my share of insults by the Government. I will not sign a document which I know the Government is going to throw to the scrap heap. And here I have got the indication. I made a most innocent suggestion. Deshbandhu Das had played a noble role in the life of India. And you know how much he cherished the welfare of the political prisoners. I asked the Government of India 'Would you perform one graceful act to honour his memory ?' Government would have got a supreme moral victory. But look at Birkenhead's reply. He says, he is prepared to consider any suggestions for allaying the present unrest in India, but the suggestion that has come from Gandhi is not practical. I confess, I have no ingenuity to suggest anything more practical, and yet it has gone to the scrap-heap. If the Government does not grant any relief even in such minor things, is there any good in discussing such an important thing as the Commonwealth



of India Bill ? Mrs. Besant is a great optimist and though, like myself, she has crossed the first half of her life, she believes that something must be done for Swaraj."

Q : "Supposing we join the Congress and drop the 'Anglo' prefix. What would you suggest in the transition stage ? We shall lose the few privileges we enjoy and get nothing in return."

A : "This is the fairest question. You mean to say that for some purposes you are classed with Europeans. I have asked you to shed your extraordinary rights and privileges. You really don't want them. You point out that you can join the Indian Auxiliary Force. I give you the same reply. You will say in your pride and self-respect, 'We don't want these special privileges. It demoralises and pauperises us to enjoy them.' I want you to think in terms of the masses and not in terms of the hierarchy or priesthood of India. The upper stratum among you wants to be absorbed in Europeans. It is an impossible dream. Against its will the lower stratum is going to be absorbed among Indians in course of time. But this unwilling absorption will do it little good. A thief going to a jail is not ennobled, but I have come out of jail a better man. I examined myself in that sanctuary. There is a fundamental difference between a man's involuntarily being drawn into a cell and his voluntarily courting it. Now, how is it possible for you to be re-absorbed, as I want you to ? Well, I won't give what you want for asking. I do not want you to be lulled into a false sense of security. I only want you to say, 'We cannot lose anything by toeing the line with the people.' If I were you and heard Gandhi, I would say to myself, 'Well, I must do things I *must* do.' But after I have become an Indian and am betrayed, I shall turn a rebel against the Indian nation, but refuse to be a European. And you need not be borne down by the thought of being a small minority. It is sometimes a privilege to be in a minority. I have said so often, I have prayed to God to put me into the minority of one. If I had not the clog—the burden

of mass reverence—I would hurl defiance to the Government today. I shall not sacrifice a little of my principle for the mass adoration. I cannot be lulled into vanity by blind admiration. Englishmen do not say, 'We will be engulfed, as we are so few.' I know they have the force of the bayonet. But it will ruin them some day, if they are not warned betimes. You may rely on your soul-force or on bayonet. But look at our degradation. It is your privilege to raise this degradation."

Q: "Lord Birkenhead will not always hold office. If you are an optimist, why are you worrying about the future ?

A: "I am an optimist, an irrepressible optimist. But I am an optimist because I believe in myself. This looks very arrogant. Is it really so ? It is because of humility that I say so. I believe in God—in His omnipotence—and have no fear of the future of humanity. Whatever Lord Birkenhead may say, when it pleases God to confound the wisdom of men, can anybody stop Him ? He is a consummate *jadugar* (magician). And that is why I have placed myself in His hands and expect big things from myself. But I have not got them yet. When I become a perfect being, I won't need to reason with you. Tomorrow when that happens, I give you my word, I will only say, 'My pledge must be honoured. I will draw my cheque on the nation by the right of service. I aim at that perfection and then I will defy any power on earth.'"

A controversy had risen in Ahmedabad from an article in a monthly, 'Manthan,' a cutting of which was sent to Gandhiji. He then wrote the following letter to Maulana Shaukat Ali :

148, Russa Road,  
Calcutta,  
d. 29.7.1925

"My dear friend and brother,

"A magazine editor has sent me an article he has written on the prophet which has given rise to excited meeting in



Ahmedabad. He sends me also a copy of the 'Khilafat' dated 29th May.

"The article is not discourteous or abusive. I do not think that it warrants all the excitement that it has given rise to. At the same time it is an ignorant writing. The writer does not appear to me to have read any good biography. Certainly, he has not read the Quran. He has given an estimate of the life of the Prophet which we find in the ordinary European reviews. The writer has asked for my opinion and I have told him as much as I have told you. I would not have worried you about this thing, had it not been for the number of "The Khilafat" that he has sent me.

"In my opinion "The Khilafat" writer has unnecessarily excited passion. I have read other portions of that number also out of curiosity, and I must confess that I do not like the language or the general tone of this particular number at all. 'Fools, asses, downright lying' and such choice epithets embellish its paragraphs. I think you ought to control the language of the paper. I have not read a single, well-thought-out, decent paragraph. I am sure that the writer does not even know that he has used unbecoming language."

Gandhiji visited Jamshedpur for two days, the 8th and the 9th August 1925. It is the creation of the genius of the late Sri Jamshedji Tata. What was once an insignificant village is now a busy city with a population of one hundred and six thousands, owing to the iron and steel industry there. Gandhiji wanted to have a look at this town since a long time. When he was in Bihar in 1917, the Governor, Sir Edward Gait, had advised him not to leave Bihar without a visit there. But this is not the place to give a history of the development of that industry and of the town. The growth of that enterprise is a glorious chapter in the life of Sri Jamshedji Tata. The industry was established to demolish the disdain of Englishmen and Americans who had thought that it was impossible for Indians to establish an iron and steel industry and manufacture such sheets. And now within 10 or 12 years the industry's

expansion is so phenomenal as to amaze anybody. When during the World War ( No. 1 ), the government was hard put to it to have iron and steel goods, it was this Company that supplied the materials in hundreds of thousands of tons. The site of the industry is chosen so well that all the three components lie almost at hand. There are iron, dolomite stone and coal mines—the last provides coke—very near these gigantic mills that employ 30000 workers including 250 Europeans. Like the homely sacrificial fire of an orthodox Hindu gentleman or the sacred fire in a Parsi Temple, these mills work round the clock—at least the furnaces have to be kept burning incessantly, even if the machinery is allowed rest.

It was just by chance that the comparison with the above religious institutions was made. What a fine thing it would be if the same religious air prevailed in such plants!—If they conduced to the same peace and elevation of the soul as religious performances do! But is there a single instance of industrial mills providing such peace and uplift? At least at present, there is unrest in Jamshedpur though the founder, Jamshedji Tata, had hoped that his venture would do immense good to India. But before his vision could materialize death called him away. Perhaps, like his plant which has now taken concrete shape, his noble desire may also be realised in future.

Jamshedpur also is not free from the taints that are inevitably connected with an industrial town. It must be added that attempts have been made to do away with many of them and that some difficulties were almost unavoidable. To introduce a Western industry in India, and successfully compete with the West at the same time, necessarily required dependence on the West to some extent, at least, at the start.

Importation of machinery from the West, dependence on Western technical experts who knew the know-how, and all those flaws that helpless dependence brought with them were thus an unavoidable evil. After 10 years' effort Indians now perform tasks that involve the hardest physical labour and the sharpest watchfulness quite as well as Englishmen and Americans.



But the Whites were brought here under contracts for specified pay and period and they are paid accordingly, while Indians doing the very same job may perhaps not be getting even half those amounts. In the sheet plant we saw a very active Welshman drawing out with long forceps red-hot sheets from a blazing furnace, turning their side as perfectly as we do our unleavened bread, and putting them into another machine. But we saw Indians too doing the same thing with the same efficiency and quickness, and yet their salaries differed. To watch with ceaseless alertness red-hot rail-bars of steel racing away before your eyes and immediately, when cut to a particular size, to lift up the residual pieces with forceps and throw them aside was a task more difficult than even catching an infuriated cobra with a long forcep. But we saw Indians performing even that feat. The Superintendents of all the Departments were at first Englishmen, but Indians have replaced them and they too are doing their work quite as well. But Indians do not get the same pay for the same work. Let it be added, however, that the Company does not stand to blame for this iniquity as much as it seems to. In order to develop an entirely new industrial enterprise in India, skilled technicians had to be imported by offers of alluring salaries and so long as the contracts with them remain in force, this inequality is bound to continue. In view of the benevolent aim and attitude of the Company, one has got to put up with this situation for some time at least.

That aim is evident from the Industrial School which the Company has opened in order to gradually substitute the European staff by the Indian. 24 candidates chosen from all over India are accepted for training. Science graduates alone are selected and the Company spends annually Rs 2000/- per student. Under a guarantee of five years' service to the Company, these trainees are then given the grade of Rs. 200 or 250 to Rs. 650 or 700. This is definitely a laudable attempt.

The town planning scheme too was made by the Company's own engineer. Even there we find distinction made between

the White and the Coloured. The possession of a vast area has helped in the construction of the town, but the Company has built houses mainly which only high grade officers can afford to rent; and as there is a shortage of ordinary tenements, three or four families earning low salaries are often seen living in a flat having four rooms. All the same the attempt to maintain cleanliness everywhere is fairly evident.

There is, moreover, a hospital run by the Company for the maintenance of public health. Medicine is provided free to all, no matter whether they are actual employees or not and even treatment in the hospital is free of charge. But it is surprising that there is not a single lady doctor, though the plant has quite a number of women on its roll. Gandhiji visited the hospital. He was happy at its equipment and cleanliness. A patient, an Englishman, was reading a book. "So you spend your time in reading?" said Gandhiji, "Yes, I do," he replied. "Were I your nurse, I would have made you turn a spinning wheel!" was Gandhiji's remark.

Water is supplied to the whole population, as the Company has its own waterworks. The sewage-water of the major part of the town is carried and cleaned through gutters and is turned into liquid manure, which is used for agriculture.

Eight hours' hard physical labour is no reason why there should be no public life at all in the town—though admittedly it does not conduce to its growth. High officers have formed their own clubs, libraries, etc. For the small artisans there is no such facility. As there is no public life worth the name there, it is impossible to expect any propaganda of Khadi etc. But if Tata Company only takes it into its head, it can provide Khadi to its 30,000 employees. At one of the Officers' Clubs, the daughter of the Parsi Secretary threw a garland of flowers round Gandhiji's neck and remarked in jest, "It is swadeshi, Sir!" "Yes, God be thanked that you have remained swadeshi to that extent," was Gandhiji's rejoinder.

If we thus probe into the life lived there, we may say that the banes of Western culture have played a very harmful role.



As it is a must to be in pants etc. when one is working in a machine plant, even after their return home the workers move about as 'sahebs'. There are two indigenous and one foreign liquor shops. All the three have been licenced by the Company itself. They carry on a roaring business of thousands of rupees a month. The crime figure has, therefore, gone up alarmingly high. A long time ago we happened to visit a factory owned by Kirloskar Bros. It manufactures agricultural implements. It is a pigmy compared with this giant of Tata Steel, and yet we found far greater peace, hygiene and sanitation there than here.

The Tata Company has, therefore, to discharge the very onerous responsibility of looking after the welfare of the hundred thousand souls that are its dependents, over and above that of competing with and beating the West.

Labour unions are established in all such centres of industry, so that the workers themselves may also share the burden of responsibilities. There was one such Union here also. It came into conflict with the Company two years ago; there was a strike and rioting and firing also. But that is all old history. That happened when the Company was denying recognition to the Union and had actually discharged Mr. Shethi, its Secretary, from service. In order to secure recognition for the Union, Mr. Andrews ( C. F. Andrews ) pressed Gandhiji this year to visit Jamshedpur. Deshbandhu Das and Panditji ( Motilalji, father of Jawaharlal Nehru ) were appointed arbitrators last year to settle the dispute between the Company and its employees. Deshbandhu is no more and Panditji is almost always an invalid. It was, therefore, Jawaharlal who came here last year. Mr. Andrews and Jawaharlal had consultations with Mr. Tata. Gandhiji was requested to take part in these consultations and the result has been happy. Mr. Tata has not only agreed to recognise the Trade Union and accept its constitution, but also to help it in the collection of the subscriptions of members by deducting the required amounts from

their salaries. He has given hopes of the restitution of Mr. Shethi also to his old post.

And it was Gandhiji who was entrusted with the duty of announcing this amicable settlement before the vast public meeting held in the *maidan* before the Company's club. In a long speech he gave the details of the compromise and his views on the relationship that ought to subsist between workmen and their employers. I give here a substantial portion of the speech as it is of much more than local interest. But before I give it, let me state first that the town collected a respectable amount for the Deshbandhu Memorial. The women's meeting gave Rs. 650 in cash and ornaments worth about 3 or 4 hundred. The Akalis ( a reforming Sikh sect ) contributed Rs. 500. With that amount and another collection, the All India ( Deshbandhu ) Memorial Fund was started. The town had already collected Rs. 5000/- for the All Bengal Fund and they were handed over to Gandhiji when a welcome address was given to him. A promise of another 5000 rupees to be given before the end of the current month was also given. After giving his thanks for the address and the donation for the Deshbandhu Memorial, Gandhiji said:

"Since a pretty long time I had a desire to see this biggest industrial enterprise of India. And when the President of the Workers' Union, Mr. Andrews, whom I regard as dearer than my brother, gave me a pressing invitation, it became impossible for me to refuse it. He told me, 'Do come over here before you leave Bengal and render some service to the workers.' His wishes are to me orders which I must gladly obey. My relationship with him is perhaps closer than with anybody else. Though he is an Englishman and I a man born on the Indian soil, our friendship has grown ever deeper and he believes that a day will dawn when, out of our regard for each other, a like friendliness will spring up between Indians and Englishmen living in India. The fruit is always in the hands of God, but man has got to do his best. Both of us strive for such harmony day and night and we wish to live for the realisa-



tion of that aim Both of us have grown sick of murder and violence going on in the world. We cannot bear the sight of human beings, children of the same Father, butchering one another. We earnestly hope to see the world discard the arbitrament of the sword and accept that of soul-force and sanity. That is why we meet and work together. It is, therefore, at his instance that I have come here. You must not expect from him an advice that may create a friction between Tata and you. And even if you want it and ask for it, he will not give it, since it is not his business to create a split between capital and labour. It is his business to end it. You have chosen a President whose only aim is to render service to the whole of India through service to you and it was for that broader object that he has drawn me here.

"I enjoyed Mr. Tata's hospitality for 2 days. With great love he showed me round his town and has been showering his love on me since a long time. If I can speak for myself, I may say I am a younger brother of the Parsi community. I have spent my life in the company of Parsis. Perhaps no other community has helped me as much as the Parsis. That is why I have never been held back from approaching them. When I was in South Africa, Ratan Tata sent me a magnificent contribution. He was the first ever to send me the large amount of 25000 rupees. He wrote to me in addition that I could ask for more, if I found it necessary. So I am under a debt of deep obligation to the Tatas. And even now, right now, Mr. Tata has evidenced the same deep affection for me and bridged up a long-standing dispute. I am the witness of the agreement arrived at by Jawaharlal, Andrews and he.

"The first term of the agreement is the recognition of your Union. That means the company will always be prepared to carefully consider your submission. In pursuance of the second condition the company wants even to encourage your Union. Workers are quick to quarrel, but are timid at the same time. They may wish it, but are afraid to be members of the Union. Now by the compromise brought about today, you get the

Company's blessings for the step. If the arrangement under which you can get your subscription paid up directly from your salary suits you, Mr. Tata is prepared to provide you that convenience. Have no fear and distrust now. He wishes nothing but well of you. He told me, 'I regard my labourers as my children. I or my officers may err at times, but my motives are good. I put the welfare of my workers above my own interests. Their happiness is my happiness.' It is to prove his good intentions that he has blessed your Union. The Company will collect your subscriptions but will have no hand in their management. Then there is this third good news for you. He has sympathetically considered the case of your Secretary, who has been dismissed on suspicion. The question of his re-appointment lies with the Directors, not him only. But Mr. Andrews pleaded for Sri Shethi's restoration. Your Manager expressed his willingness and Mr. Tata said he would try to get him back to his post in order that the honesty of his motives could be tested. I hope other Directors also will raise no objection.

"So these three things have been settled to your satisfaction. But what are you going to do in return? I have become a labourer in order that I can understand the virtues and vices of your class. That is what makes me live and move among you. I hope you will serve the Company loyally and abide by the rules and regulations of your Union, so that you can prove that you are worthy of the love that has impelled Mr. Tata to come to an amicable settlement and that Mr. Andrews deserves to be your leader and you are worthy of his leadership. He does not draw any salary from your fund and serves you selflessly. I hope the time will never come when we may be taunted, "This was done at your instance and see the evil that has come out."

"I want the friendship of the rich—for the sole object that the rich may get richer only after giving the poor their full share and not by starving them. That is not how matters stand to-day and the result is that capital is afraid of labour and labour is at cross-purposes with capital. But it is my business



to end that unhappy relationship and form a new one based on love. I ask you to help me in my attempt.

"I beg of you one or two things. There is no comparison between my work and yours. You produce thousands of tons of iron and steel, but I wish to dig out gold by touching the hearts of the people of India. Money is needed for exploiting that gold mine and for it I want your help. You can help me with money and with purchase of Khadi which villagers produce. You put in your labour in the plant in order to fill your own stomach but I want you to labour for half an hour more for the sake of India also. Turn the spinning wheel for half an hour and wear Khadi. I want two other pledges from you. Liquor is Satan's progeny. The workman drinks and forgets the distinction between mother and sister and wife. He uses filthy language. Save yourself from that Satan's imp. Give up drink and that other sin adultery. It is liquor that leads you to it. That man is not worth the name who casts an evil eye on a woman. If you want to be the servants of the country, reliable door-keepers and watchmen, true sons of your mother, you must give the go-bye to illicit connection. When a man ceases to be a man and becomes an animal, God's wrath descends on him. There are among you brave sailors and Pathans. To them I say, 'Show your valour in the service of India, in the protection of your sisters. If lust possesses your mind, drown yourself in the river, or if you are brave enough, thrust your dagger in your heart and die, but do not rob any sister of her honour.' If you wish to have Swaraj, you must shun these two enemies. If you want to save yourselves from ruin, fly from these two cankers. May God grant you the wisdom to appreciate my advice and implement it."

When he repeated his speech in English, he spoke on this last matter with intense feeling. He stated that the chief fault for the bane lay with the well-to-do and burst out : "Millionaires are not slow to brag that they drink temperately, but I have seen them lose their senses, become blind to the presence of their mothers and sisters and roll on the floor."

There was a soiree one evening. Only the high officers were present. It was meant to be only a *conversazione*, but Gandhiji was requested to address the assembly instead. His expressions in that speech on the relationship between Indians and Englishmen are worth recording.

"I am told that Englishmen and Indians live on cordial terms here. May this be literally true. It is a piece of great fortune to have to work together in this great industrial centre. For the success of the industry you may be maintaining unity and love within the precincts of the plant, but I wish you to behave with the same love and consideration even outside, act like brothers and sisters and never suffer from a superiority or inferiority complex. If you do so, you will have established your own Swaraj in a small way.

"I have repeatedly called myself a non-co-operator and a civil resister. But my non-co-operation is aimed only at hearty co-operation in the end. I don't like a make-believe co-operation. What I want is 24 carats' gold and for that alone I have become a non-co-operator. All the same my non-co-operation does not prevent me from being friendly with Michael O'Dwyer and Dyer. (The two officers most responsible for Government's crimes in the Punjab in 1919), because my non-co-operation is against wickedness, against an evil system, not against those who work the system. My religion teaches me to love even the wicked and my political non-co-operation is but a part of my religion. I am not saying all this to flatter you. It has never been my habit to say anything just to please anybody. I am a man of forthright talk, a man who has no mental reservations and only thereby I wish to penetrate into the heart of the man I talk with. I may fail for a time, but it has been my experience that the man of truth is heard at last and understood. My desire that there may be perfect harmony in your relations with one another comes from the depth of my heart. In the same way it is the earnest prayer of my heart that your brotherly living together in this place may help India to release herself from sin and bondage and deliver the message



of peace to the world outside. This mingling of Indians and Europeans will be worthwhile only when we stay together for the spread of brotherhood and peace. May you, through the service of Tata, serve India also and always remember that you are collaborating not only for the progress of this industry, but for a higher, nobler, goal."

Many Englishmen came to meet Gandhiji after his speech to the missionaries. One of them defended Bishop Heber's song, which Gandhiji had specially mentioned in that speech, on the ground that the song did not refer to Indians but only to Christians and that they described themselves in their songs very often as the worst of sinners. It was very easy for Gandhiji to put this defence out of court.

He simply quoted those parts of that song which said that India, Africa and such other countries were inviting the Christians to spread their light in these lands, and that it was there that nature's prospect pleased but only man was vile, because the heathen was worshipping wood and stone in his blindness.<sup>1</sup> "Is it not strange," Gandhiji asked, "that song, written ages ago is still sung in Christian circles?"

Another Christian gentleman, however, frankly admitted that Gandhiji's speech was perfectly apposite and it served the missionaries right to be told so, and his remarks on Bishop Heber also were quite correct, since they were still singing that song in their prayers !

A Christian weekly, 'The Catholic Herald of India,' reproduced that speech verbatim and commented in its occasional notes in effect :

"Nobody ever questioned Mahatma Gandhiji's truthfulness, but people had their doubts on the score of his friendliness for opponents and critics. During his stay in Calcutta this time, he is removing that fear also. There were many Christians who wondered why the Mahatma did not turn a Christian. 'He has Christian virtues. Why then does he not turn a Christian ?' they asked. He gave an explicit answer to that question on that

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1. See footnote P. 131.

day : 'I get all that I want from Hinduism.' A number of Christians have pleaded with him and, though he has given them the fullest latitude, have not been able to convert him. Mahatma Gandhi does not live in a world of dreams. He has followed up in action the The Sermon On The Mount, as perhaps none else has. It is the Christians who had better look into their own hearts."

Gandhiji then spoke before two other Christian gatherings—members of the London Missionary Society of India and the Young Men's Christian Association. The subject at the former was "World-Brotherhood." The Society is made up mainly of Indian Christians. Gandhiji first recalled his long contact with Indian Christians in South Africa which dated as far back as from 1893 and said :

"It was a pleasant surprise to me to find that though many of them had never seen India, they had so much love for their motherland. Most of them were children of indentured labourers. Sir William Wilson Hunter has described their state as that of serfdom. I say this in order that you may have an idea of the tremendous odds against which they must have fought in order to free themselves from slavery and lead a respectable life. Some of them are England-returned educated men, some general merchants. Some brave young men among them served the Government in the Boer War and Zulu Rebellion. Some were bred up in my own home and two of these have become Barristers. That shows how close my relationship with the Indian Christians was. There might be hardly any Indian Christian there who did not know me or whom I didn't. On the ground of that contact I have great pleasure in addressing you on "World Brotherhood." How can those brothers who are suffering there under many disabilities have any idea of this 'world brotherhood?' They will only say, "We cannot understand how there can be brotherhood between man and man, when attempts are constantly made here to banish us, or, as an Englishman's news-paper puts it, 'to starve us out of the land.' All the same I agreed to speak on this subject for the sole



reason that it is during hard times and adverse climate that a man's love for his fellow-man is really tested.

"I am often eulogised for this and that. I simply hear those praises by one ear and drive them out by the other. But I am tempted to accept the quality—you attribute to me. You say if anybody has the right to speak on world brotherhood, it is, I, I agree with you. I have often tried to see whether I am capable of hating – not of loving, but hating—anybody. And I must honestly and with due humility say that I have never felt I can hate any human being. I cannot remember any occasion that made me hate anybody. I cannot understand how I came by that state of mind. But I speak only of what I have been practising all my life. That is no brotherhood which makes you feel brotherly or loving towards one who becomes your brother, who loves you. That is only an exchange. Brotherhood is not a business deal and my religion teaches me that I should love not only human beings but all creatures. Some Humanitarian Societies in England publish monthly magazines. I remember having read a poem "My brother—the bullock" in one of them some 30-35 years ago. In beautiful touching lines, that poem exhorted the man who loved his kind to love every creature as well. The poem simply charmed me. My knowledge of Hinduism was next to nil then. I had only imbibed what I could from my parents and other dear ones and from my environment. All the same I could at once see that every religion preaches this fraternity of all creatures. But I am not talking today of that oceanic, all-embracing, brotherhood. I have referred to all this simply to show that if we are not prepared to love our enemy,<sup>1</sup> our brotherhood is only a cant. To put it in other words, the man who has assimilated the spirit of brotherhood would protest against being called an enemy. Others may

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1. उपकारिणु यः साधुः साधुत्वे तस्य को गुणः ।

अपकारिणु यः साधुः स साधुः सद्भिर्बुध्यते ॥

Cf "He who is good towards one who does you good is not good at all. Sages call that man good who is good towards those who do him harm"—a Sanskrit verse.

regard us as their enemies, but we can never say we are their enemies.

"The question then arises how to love those who consider us their enemies. I am flooded daily with articles from Hindus, Muslims, and Christians that call it absurd to regard an enemy as a friend. If it is a Hindu writer, he says, 'How is it possible to love the Mussalman who kills the cow which the Hindu loves as his life?' A Christian writer wonders, 'Love the Hindu who believes in untouchability and crushes fellow humans as untouchables! Impossible.' And the Mussalman asks, 'How can I love the Hindu who worships a stone?' What I want to say is this: 'If you cannot love all the three, your brotherliness has no value.'

But what does this feeling of hate indicate? Does it mean fear? Intolerance? If we are children of the same Father, why should we be afraid of one another or hate the person who thinks differently from us? But then shall we let the Mussalman do a thing which makes our flesh creep? My sense of brotherliness answers, 'Yes', but I add, 'You must sacrifice yourself. If you want to save the thing you love, you must die for it and not kill the man.' I am speaking from personal experience. If your love is strong enough to have the courage to suffer, you will be able to melt any stony heart. You may thrash a villain, but suppose he is physically stronger. What will you do? Will he not overpower you and commit greater crimes? Does not history testify that the fire of wickedness is fed by the oil of counter-violence? And does not that same history furnish on the other hand instances of the wildest and fiercest beasts subdued by those who had attained the peak of non-violence?

But let us not talk of that perfection of non-violence. It requires greater heroism than of brave soldiers, but it is better to fight the man you hate than do nothing but whimper and whine for fear of death at his hands. Cowardice and brotherhood go ill together. The world does not accept today the idea of loving the enemy. Even in Christian Europe the principle of



non-violence is ridiculed. While somebody writes to me from there : "Will you explain more clearly this your principle of non-violence ?" Some one else tells me: 'You can safely talk of non-violence, because you are ensconced in India. You can't think of it in Europe.' And there are others who affirm; 'Christianity has become a pretence at present. Christians do not understand the message of Jesus. It is necessary to deliver it over again in the way we can understand.' All the three are right from their own angles. But I must say that so long as we do not accept the principle of loving the enemy, all talk of world brotherhood is an airy nothing. Many men and women ask me, "Is it ever possible for the weak human flesh to rise above the inborn desire to avenge one's wrongs ?" I say, 'Yes. It is because we are not fully conscious of our manhood, that we cannot shed hatred and enmity'. Darwin says man is descended from the monkey. If that is true, we have not yet attained the stage of man. Dr. Anna Kingsford writes, 'I have seen lions, tigers, wolves, and serpents roaming in the streets of Paris in human form.' In order to shed that beastliness, man has got to shed fear. Only the awakening of a spiritual power lying dormant within us can make us fearless; and not our equipment with arms. The Mahabharata has called forgiveness a hero's ornament or quality. There is a statue of General Gordon which represents him with a stick, not a sword, to show how brave he was. Were I a sculptor and asked to make his statue, I would have shown him with arms folded in front, chest forward, and would have inscribed the following words as his utterance : "Do what you may. Without fear, without malice, and without return, I stand like a rock to receive all your blows." That is my ideal of a hero. Such heroes have become immortal. Christianity has produced such heroes and so have Hinduism and Islam. I don't subscribe to the view that Islam is the religion of the sword. History does not support it.

'But these are examples of individuals. History shows others also, where whole communities have shed hatred. As mankind assimilates more and more the lesson of brotherhood, the spirit

of non-violence among whole masses of men will spread wider. The history of Quakers and those others, the Dukhobors, whom Tolstoy has spoken of, shows how masses also can be filled with brotherly feelings.

“But some celebrated writers of Europe and some savants of India as well say that humanity can never be free from hate. I contest the view. I even say that until man frees himself from hate, he cannot become a ‘man,’ cannot be his real self. Willy-nilly and soon or late we shall have to take that road and that alone. And I have come here to ask you ‘Why not go that way willingly and soon, rather than be forced into it?’ It may seem strange that I should say this to Christians. But I have pleaded for the same thing to Hindus also. Some Christians, however, tell me that Jesus’ message of love was meant only for His 12 disciples. In India also, those who deprecate non-violence say that it will make India a country of cowards. To them I wish to say, ‘India is doomed, if it does not accept non-violence.’ All other nations also are, but I talk of India because it is itself a big continent. If this giant of India becomes aggressive and violent like the countires of other continents, it will crush the weak; and you can imagine the consequences.

“My nationalism embraces all creatures, all nations of the world. And if I am able to fire India with the spirit of non-violence, it can show a miracle to the world also. I don’t want India to rise from the ashes of other nations. I want India to gain soul-force and make other nations strong. Other nations are not teaching us the way of strength. And that is what has compelled me to take my stand on that eternal principle and declare that I am never going to accept a constitution based on brute force.

“President Wilson submitted his 14 points but at the end, as a climax or an anti-climax, he thundered: “If we don’t succeed in making the world accept them, of course, there is the sword with us,” I want to reverse his threat and say: “All our earthly weapons have failed. Let us find out some new one



or we die. Let us now take up the weapon of love—of truth. When we acquire that weapon, we shall require no other.”

That was how an incessant stream of eloquence flowed from his lips that day. He then concluded the speech with the story of Prahlad.<sup>1</sup>

The other speech was delivered before Y. M. C. A. on 12. 8. 1925 and had for its subject “The Duty of Young Men.”

@ “I think you will accept my apology I have to tender practically at every meeting for not being able to stand up. It is due to my physical incapacity. I must confess to you that I feel embarrassed—not in the subject-matter but in the manner of the audience, because I never expected a large number of young men interspersed with a few elderly men. I have many English friends, but I find facing me a large number of Europeans and a few young Indian friends. It is very difficult in an instant to change one’s thoughts and suit oneself to a new audience. However, I shall endeavour to say to you what is just uppermost in my mind.

“Let me explain what I did to the London Missionary Society—that my contact with Indian Christians is very old. I came in close touch with them in 1893, when I went to South Africa. I lived with them or rather they lived with me. Some were also brought up with me. And on return from South Africa—after a stay there of 20 years or over—I have not lost sight of Indian Christians. Some of you perhaps know the very intimate friendship I had the privilege of enjoying with the late Sushilkumar Rudra ( Principal of a Christian College in Delhi and a common friend of C. F. Andrews and Gandhiji ). His house was my home in Delhi and many of the most important things of my life, during my stay in India since 1915, were conceived under his roof and with his knowledge. I could cite

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1. Demon King Hiranyakashipu’s son, who though only a child, was tortured by his father in many ways for taking Lord Vishnu’s name against the royal orders. Lord Vishnu then assumes the Man-lion Form and kills the king to save his *bhakta*.

to you several other instances of Indian Christian friends. So I claim to know Indian Christian life. So what I say will enable some European friends to understand my view-point and to help me along the lines I suggest.

“One thing I found in South Africa and here also is that Indian Christians are going to cut themselves adrift from the general mass from which they spring and to which they belong and which they must necessarily serve. I would remind you of a youth in my place, where we had a large English mission—a Presbyterian Mission—nearly 35 years ago. You may take it from me that much of the belief I entertained, or was given to me then, still persists. It is likely that it will be contradicted, but the belief is general, not mine only. A well-to-do young Indian had accepted Christianity and the talk was that the rite of initiation consisted in taking beef and brandy. The young man who was dressed in the costume of his parents was dressed differently. ‘He is like a Jangla ( European ) ’ they said and from that moment he not only became, but made himself, an outcaste. He felt he had nothing to do with his parents or those with whom he was brought up. That kind of belief persists even today.

“I discussed it with ( Sushilkumar ) Rudra also and he felt considerable force in what I said. I asked him, ‘What happened to these men ? Why should they make themselves utter strangers in manners, food, dress ? Is it all a necessity of Christian life ?’ And he immediately said, ‘no’; and he tried to the utmost of his ability to tell the youth surrounding him : “Try to show by precept and example that it was not right, it was no part of a Christian Indian’s duty, to change all this.”

“In my humble opinion a Christian young Indian owes a double duty—to those whose religion he has given up and to those whose religion he has adopted.

“Talking now in the worldly language—because heaven knows what the real religion of Jesus was or is; and I have not a shadow of doubt that if He came today, He would probably disown 3/4ths of what passes today in the name of Christianity



—the Indian Christian's duty to the religion he has given up is to retain all the good that belongs to it and impart it to the new he has taken. Contrarily, he takes the best of the new religion and transmits it to those whom he has left or who have banished him. But that never happens in a majority of cases. With deep grief that has to be noted. And in Madras you go to different quarters altogether, different atmosphere altogether, but by no means a congenial surroundings. You will find there vice double-distilled and no gain on either side.

"You often hear their complaint: 'Dont you see we are isolated?' The term is harsh, but one young man said, 'We are as if in a prison. We can't mix with you and Europeans won't with us.' To the extent it is true, it is tragic. I tried in my wandering in Gujarat to come in contact with these men. It was difficult. I tried to talk as I kept walking on the Ellisbridge ( in Ahmedabad ) to young girls walking to their seminary. They did not even return my salaams. I attended a service also. You will be surprised to see that I was sitting in a corner hoping to exchange a word—without avail, not even a glance. Excuses there may be, but that should not be the case. You cut yourselves away from your kith and kin and I appeal to the Europeans here that in so far as it is right, it is a thing that should be redressed as soon as possible.

"The duty of young Indian Christians is as clear as crystal. They should understand the aspirations of millions, should understand the deep social problems of the masses of mankind with the greatest sympathy and attention. No mere superficial study will be of any avail. They will have to study it deeply. I mean, the distress that is taking away the lives of people. A doctor told me that 12 men and women were dying of disease in Bengal per hour. I could immediately realize it. Probably none would die, if they had a little bit of the knowledge of hygiene, if they had the wherewithal to buy milk and food. Anyone who travels through villages is certain to discover that people can't have money to buy milk, that cattle are dying for want of care and grazing. He will find ignorance, poverty,

despair and many other things which are eating into the vitals of society.

"I don't know how far it is true of young Christians, but I have heard of many that it is not all well with them; it is not a life of cleanliness. You don't want me to define the term. It is a terrible thing. It should be the privilege of Christian men to study and deal with this problem, if they have religious cleanliness. They are passing through schools and colleges like so many pieces of a machine—but they don't think, don't originate, forget the mother-tongue. They try to learn the English language, succeed in making a hash of it and, trying to think in a foreign tongue, become paralysed. Their brain does not respond and all originality is lost. A lot of young men met a lady once at the dead of night. When they were passing by her, they asked her what they should do in a conflict of opinions. She said, they should make their choice. But they said, "We can't make the choice. We can't think for ourselves." There is something radically wrong in a system which has brought about such helplessness.

"It is wrong for Christian Indians to forget their birthright. They will make themselves unfit for service if they do not learn their own language. If they want to give their countrymen a message of hope, if they want to make a fundamental reform, if they want to appeal to their hearts, they can do so through their mother-tongue only. I have recently heard of Madhusudan Datta. He was as good a Bengali scholar as English, but some of the finest poems he has written has enriched his mother-tongue. Kali Charan Banerjee was also the same. Had I not known that he was a Christian, from all outward appearances I could not have imagined it. I felt I was in a well-appointed Hindu home—all in a Hindu key. He has left a lesson for us. I had the same experience in Sushilkumar Rudra's home, though not in the same degree. If young Indian Christians are to serve their country, are to serve the religion they profess, it will be necessary to revise a great deal of what they are doing today.



“As I thought what next to say, I was reminded of a verse in Romans. As I was talking to a friend who is a vegetarian, he quoted this verse, XIV *Romans*, that if meat offended thy brother, you should not take it. There are many things that offend the masses, when they chance to see anything in the Indian Christians’ lives. They should abjure them in order to express the real Christian in their lives. When they study the lawful sentiments of the masses, I do not want them to tolerate anything that is evil in the masses—there can be no compromise with that—but let them respect the sentiments, the delicate prejudices of the masses, if they want to win them over.

“I should like to refer to the drink evil also. It is a great curse degrading humanity and eating into the vitals of Indian labour. Travelling through Travancore, a major county, you find the finest Indian Christians. Some of them told me that at a particular place a majority of my audience would be Christians. Would I not lay emphasis on temperance? I asked. They said it was not necessary. No Christian has told me that it is necessary I next asked those young men to see to it that not only they did not drink, but persuaded others not to drink—not by violence but by a loving approach—till with long attention they gave it up. It may take time, but it does not matter. Today I think of those young men and women in Travancore who are going down deeper in poverty every day. There is the aping of European living and so the feeling that somehow those increased wants must be fulfilled. Add to it the drink evil and the cup of your misery is full. How can this curse be removed without prohibition? I do not know. I am discussing this question with my Indian Christian friends.

“I got a letter from a Christian friend that I was libelling Christianity, but I talk about the drink evil at the present moment, because it is a thing I have got to be dealing with. Thousands of labourers in Ahmedabad are drawn from all communities. And I find that the evil is common to all the communities. It should be the ability of young men to deal with this problem.

"I think I have done. Many more things I should have said, but I have refrained and placed only stray thoughts based on experience over large areas. I must tell you one thing before I close. In South Africa when I reached there, there was not such a gulf between Indian Christians and Indians. The Indian did not realize that there was an Indian Christian Community. It exists here. It is neither creditable to Hindus nor to others. Who makes an advance is of no moment. Whoever makes it shall get credit in God's presence.

"Thank you for a patient hearing."

Then there were questions and answers as usual :

Q : "Is there any improvement at the present day, over a generation after ?"

A : "Great improvement."

Q : "Don't you find young men of other communities having a tendency in the direction you have charged Indian Christians with ?"

A : "Yes, it is common. I spoke with reticent caution. I do not know how far the charge of uncleanness can be levelled against Indian Christians."

Q : "If he ( Gandhiji ) had been faced with young Indians, what would have been his message ?"

A : "Here is my instrument ( Takli ). I have told them how they could penetrate and work for the masses. That is what I had intended them to do."

Q : "Can You give us some indication how men of all communities might serve the masses ?"

A : "I have given instances of work being done today by young men. We don't talk of religion at all. We deal with drink, poverty, illness. What India is suffering from today is want of work—it is strange but true—and disinclination to work. I have asked young men not to find satisfaction of the soul in city life and go to villages. There was one single work general for all. My difficulty is to find young men willing to go to villages. This is common to all—Christians and



others. They cling to city life. They are not at all comfortable in villages. Let them prepare themselves for service in villages, study their primary wants and satisfy them. I have worked in Champaran (in Bihar), provided medical relief, taught them sanitation, not by lording it over them, but in a spirit of service. The workers cleaned their wells and courtyards. People required a doctor. He and other workers flourished. They had not to talk politics. But their business was to teach children and give medicine—simple medicines like quinine, castor oil etc. They succeeded because it was the living touch that mattered. Champaran is the terrain of the Himalayas. We lived mostly as villagers—live, with shovels and axes, and scavengers. I would then have talked to them of the manner of the disposal of night soil and how we saved thousands of rupees in South Africa thereby. But I had to leave for Kaira.”

Q: “The question for doctors is how to maintain themselves when Ayurvedic medicines and quackery appeal more to villagers.”

A: “That is not my experience. I may cite the instance of the Nadiad Mission Hospital. Thousands receive medical aid there. They go to a live English missionary. The question is a figment of one’s imagination.”

Q: “What should be the young Indian Christian’s attitude to Europeans?”

A: “Fraternize.”

Q: “How?”

A: “First have a boxing match.”

Q: “Does the Indian Christian develop sins after adopting Christianity?”

A: “I have never said that. I do not want to cast a single aspersion on Indian Christians. I said that they isolated themselves. The sin of uncleanness, I said, was common to all. Drunkenness, I have told you, I learnt from Travancore. I do not, for one moment, say that they are developed after young men adopt Christianity.”

Q : "It has been my pleasure to fraternize with a Mussalman. He is a personal friend. He flows into my tiffin, breakfast, dinner. If we are ever going to understand the soul of our Indian supporters, we must first understand their language and fraternize through their language. But there is one point. In your definition of Christianity you miss one point. We agree you have studied the mind of Christianity. But all Europeans are not Christians, nor all Indians. It means we have not within us the working power of our great Master. He who understands the great Master will never follow the present path of Christians, which you show they take."

A : "Quite right. I have never identified the vices with any race or religion whatsoever. Every religion condemns them. No true man can harbour these vices for a minute. We have got various labels. But we are nothing if there is no reformation in us. Except a man be born again, there is no hope for him. After his new birth he becomes a man—when he is dedicated not to the world but to God."

Q : "We do feel the want of a driving force. Is there the same driving force in your faith, sir ? When Christianity drove men from England, ( the pilgrim Fathers who settled in U. S. A. ) why does it not drive them from cities ?"

A : "The driving force is there. Ramakrishna Mission is sending its men to all parts of India and the world. All young men I talked of as workers in villages are Hindus. But a comparison between a mission and college is not true. You won't expect all college students to go to villages. Besides the Ramakrishna Mission, today I can show you young Bengalees who have left wonderful careers and settled in villages. And this race of young men is multiplying."

14-8-'25

### **Serampur Weaving Institute**

The desire to visit this Institute sprang in his mind very early when Gandhiji saw the handlooms and spinning wheels of



the Serampur Institute at the Exhibition held in connection with the Faridpur Conference. But it could be satisfied only now. It is a small but charming institution conducted by the Government. There are government technical schools in the Bombay Presidency, but nowhere in them has so much emphasis been laid on spinning and weaving as at Serampur. The spinning wheel, specially, has no place at all in the Bombay schools. When we went to this Institute, we saw students working away on 20 or 25 wheels and drawing out excellent yarn at a high speed. In one part there were big foot-worked spinning wheels. They answered very well for spinning jute, tusser-silk and waste silk. The Deputy Director of Industries, Mr. Hugwarf, who had made it a point to be present there when Gandhiji visited it, showed him round the Institute when it was in full swing. He said, the big spinning wheels were devised particularly for teaching villagers the arts of spinning and weaving the jute which they were encouraged to preserve and not sell off wholly. Pit-looms, fly-shuttle looms, and other looms of various kinds were working in another section. At every loom either 'Mixed-Khadi' or 'Pure-Khadi' was written explicitly. The student is taught weaving on every pattern. After completing his training, he takes home the loom of his choice, earns his livelihood and propagates its use. The collaboration of many persons, who had to keep standing for hours, was formerly, indispensable for weaving a silken sari with variegated designs. A new loom costing 150 to 200 rupees has now been invented to dispense with the necessity of having many hands working together. Samples of silken saris woven on this new loom were shown to us and we found them excellent. Some men had come from a village to learn weaving on this new loom. We were told that they were going to work in the Institute long enough to be able to pay its cost from their weaving wages and then would carry it home. It was really a delightful sight to see numerous handlooms weaving only hand-spun yarn. There was another section for dying the cloth woven and still another where there were various instruments like

those for finding out the count of yarns, for testing their strength, for assessing the durability of the cloth woven etc. We saw that they were very small and very useful and thought that every Khadi emporium ought to have them.

There are 80 students in the Institute. The Principal is a Bengali gentleman who wears Khadi from top to toe. There are many so-called untouchables among them, but all the students live like friends.

At some distance, there is a branch of this Institution for girls. Besides all these professions, it teaches spinning, sewing, embroidery etc. to them. A Christian missionary lady is the honorary Principal there.

Gandhiji saw both the institutions and felt highly pleased. In reply to their address Gandhiji said :

@ "I am much obliged to you for the address and for providing me the pleasure of meeting you and seeing all work going on. I reciprocate your wish that you should have a permanent abode and I hope your wish will be fulfilled in the near future. I am glad to notice that you observe no distinction between touchables and untouchables, but that you are all working in a spirit of friendship and brotherliness. If it is really a fact that you have a heart-union, you have achieved a notable success.

"Naturally, as you have inferred, my visit to the town was due to my desire to see what Khadi work you were doing. You are right when you say I like all cottage industries, because they stimulate our spirits, our business-faculty and make us busy people. But after a long course of observation I have come to the conclusion that, not by the distribution of energy in various directions shall we solve our problem of giving a cottage industry to millions, but by giving them a real big thing. I agree this area produces all fibres and not cotton fibre only, but I would like you to concentrate on cotton as it is the largest commodity produced and the largest we need for our cloth requirements. I am glad that you have introduced Khaddar



as one of the industries. I wish I could persuade the authorities to give it their best or exclusive attention. I wish, as time passes, you will realise the potentialities of Khadi and make original researches so as to give India the best spinning wheel—as you have given a weaving loom – and make Khaddar durable and workable. That Khadi is costly is true and not true. You do not realise that Khadi industry is only an infant 5 years old. But it has undergone tremendous vicissitudes in that short period. It has seen hard times, passed through many dangers, gone through the necessary stage of ridicule. But it has superseded them by now and there has been phenomenal development of Khaddar in cheapness, durability, and beauty. For instance, the Andhra samples of Khadi. When it was first started in Bombay it cost 17 annas ( 16 annas=1 rupee ) per yard. Today the durability has increased tenfold and price come down 50 p. c., and this inspite of no patronage from the Government and lukewarmness from the people. It was, moreover, started by those who had no experience, never any skill.

“I wish the Institute a long life of usefulness and service to the country. I hope students discharged from time to time will have a nice career and with it not only serve themselves but the country.

“I repeat my thanks and wish success to the Institution ”

The French lady, to whom Gandhiji had written two months ago that it was not necessary for her to stay with him and one could as well elevate one's soul at home, wrote back in reply : ‘You can't have knowledge without a Guru. I have got a husband as loving as my brother. God has kept me free from poverty, wealth, and disease. Please, therefore, let me come and make you my Guru.’ Gandhiji's reply :

@ “I have your most touching letter. I do not want to strive against you, and if you wish to come, by all means do. Only remember that you will find me of the same flesh of which you and all other fellow-mortals are made. The imperishable soul within can meet and talk from a distance of thousands of miles. However, I do not wish to deny the usefulness, at time,

of physical nearness and if you gain anything by being near me physically, it will be because of your marvellous faith and not because of any superhuman powers that I possess. I am merely a seeker after truth—undoubtedly, striving to attain human perfection, which all of us can attain by continuous effort. If you decide to come, and if I know the steamer you are to take, some one will meet you at the Bombay docks and take you to the train leaving for Sabarmati. As my right hand is disabled, I am dictating this letter and signing with my left hand.”

18-8-1925

The ‘Guardian’ (“Manchester Guardian?”) has kindly noted that though nobody ever questioned Gandhiji’s sincerity people had their doubts about his friendliness towards opponents and critics, but that during his long stay in Bengal Gandhiji succeeded in removing that fear also. I think many Europeans must be feeling this sense of relief. It was perhaps because of that that he got an invitation to speak before the Rotary Club on the ‘The Economic and Spiritual Importance of the Spinning Wheel.’ Gandhiji was afraid that the word ‘spiritual’ might create a misunderstanding and was, therefore, a little reluctant about the inclusion of that word in the title of his address. But the friends who came to him to give him the invitation personally—President, Mr. James, and the Director of Industries, Mr. Weston—insisted that that word and not its substitute ‘moral’ should be used in the title. Gandhiji agreed.

The meeting was held at the Grand Hotel. It may be said that that meeting was of the highest importance, and perhaps unique, in many ways in the annals of the Club. The Club has its head-quarter in America, where it has 40 branches. It has for its motto : “Service Before Self” and has a membership of more than a hundred thousand. It has only one branch in India at Calcutta. A few years ago, when Sir Surendranath Banerjee (a well-known Moderate leader of Bengal) was invited to speak before this Club, he had characterised it as a world-institution and one that united Europeans and Indians.



There are bound to be reactionaries in all such big institutions. Those of this Club, it seems, had raised an objection against giving an invitation to Gandhiji at the preceding session and had even demanded that the whole coterie of the Directors who wanted to give an invitation to such a man as Gandhiji ought to be dismissed. But, as reports go, these 'misguided' Directors were not only completely unrepentant, but they went one step forward and arranged for a vegetarian dinner in honour of the august guest. There were at the meeting at least a hundred Britishers, a few Indians, and a large number of women :

Welcoming the guest, the President said :

@ "Mr. Gandhi is a great social reformer. Charkha is the very pivot of his activities. We welcome him as one who has throughout his life put "Service before self."

Gandhiji's speech :

@ "President and friends,

"I do not know if it is necessary to tender an apology for my physical inability to stand up. At the outset, I desire to thank you for the delicate courtesy extended to me in making your lunch a Bengali widow's lunch. I know how difficult it must be for some of you with a mere potato and cabbage lunch.

"I thank you for inviting me to speak on a subject as uninteresting as the menu before you. Charkha is not an inviting word, though I incidentally notice you call your bulletin 'Chaka'—Chakra.

"I have come to speak of the potency of the spinning wheel. ( Showing his takli ) I humourously said to a mill-owing friend that with this I beg to compete with you. But behind humour it has a seriousness all its own.

"I shall first deal with the spinning wheel and its economic value. You are all businessmen and you have extended your courtesy in that you did not call upon me to speak as you were eating.

“What is the economic value ? Let me at the outset state that the surface of India is 1900 miles long North-South and 1500 East-West, that it includes 700,000 villages, and that over this vast number of villages, a majority are not served by any railway system at all. There was a time when the spinning wheel was a supplementary occupation of its vast population. Government statistics tell us that the agricultural population is 85% and that they have to be four months in a year idle. Some in the know tell me that in Bengal there are agriculturists who have nothing to do for 6 months in a year. What will happen to a statesman who takes a holiday every year for 4 or 6 months without pay ? Not even a Viceroy or a businessman can afford it—much less an agriculturist. The late Sir William Wilson Hunter said 1/10th of the population of India lived on one meal a day and that of dry bread and a pinch of dirty salt. No ghee, no butter milk, no milk at all. Famine is chronic not because there is not sufficient grain to go throughout the length and breadth of India. It is a money famine as they have no wherewithal to buy food. For these people a supplementary occupation is an absolute necessity. If it is an absolute necessity, it must satisfy certain conditions. It must be universal and capable of being done by all. It must be such that its product can be easily taken over by the whole population. It must be such as can be easily learnt—not requiring a great deal of skill, a great deal of manufacturing skill. And it must be cheap in cost.

“If any occupation would answer all these conditions, the spinning wheel answers it. This ( takli ) gives 50 yards per hour but you can spin 850 yards on a wheel. No mill-spindle has yet produced 850 yards per hour of 10 counts. I know, thousands of spindles can be worked by a few women with power behind. It is good. I do not want to displace machinery from its proper place. But I say there is no occupation of a universal character for millions as the spinning wheel and they are born to it. One condition, however, ought to be satisfied. The product must be used by Indians—as they did a hundred years



ago. Spinning industry has died out as it could not support a large family all by itself and because there was no resistance offered by it to its destruction, as the weaving industry offered. For the simple reason that weavers lived purely upon weaving as their sole occupation, whereas the peasantry had agriculture as their back-bone.

“60 crores’ worth of foreign cloth is imported today. Indian mills also produce an equal quantity. Machine-made cloth thus comes to 120 crores. That means, 120 crores of rupees have been wrested from the hands of the peasants. You can understand what it means to poor Indians. Lord Curzon’s estimate of the average annual income of an Indian is 33 rupees. Dadabhai Naoroji’s figure is 26. Ramesh Chandra Dutt challenged Curzon’s figure. In any case it is less than 3 rupees per month. If these people can add 5 to 6 Rs. per month, is it not a fortune to them ?

“There is another point. There is a flood-area next door, where about 4000 Rupees are distributed every month. That is the economic aspect. The wheel will solve largely the problem of economic distress, famine, flood. They need not depend on charity. People must disdain to take charity. The Government also gives relief by road-repairs etc. If hand-spinning is introduced, it will prove itself an excellent method of relief.

“The spiritual aspect flows from it ( the economic ). I read with avid interest Drummond’s “Natural Law in Spiritual World.” If I had his facile pen, I would demonstrate it better that there is a spiritual law in the natural world. I would have fought against modern living which comes to this : to starve out the diseased. I have read books by sane men advocating electrocution for the diseased. It is not spiritual. It will be an inhuman remedy. I have a human spiritual remedy—the wheel. I have nothing to say against factory, but it means certain destruction of people in vast areas, which cannot be dealt with in a summary fashion as on an island. Nothing can solve the economic problem in a spiritual fashion except the wheel in each home.

"Do you want to huddle these people in boxes and expose them to hideous consequences? Man is known by his surroundings. Take Chicago or Johannesburg. You will find men walking, caring nothing, knowing nothing, but of the Stock Exchange.

"Cottages should have plenty in their homes. It gives them a dignified life, avoids strife, and fruitless ambition. He who has worked the wheel says it brings him a peace of mind. Goethe makes Margaret spin and gives a perfect song spun out of her lips—as perfect as the yarn from her wheel.

"You will say I am asking you to go back to the times when Adam delved. You will say this man is a visionary. Nothing of the kind. Matter misplaced is dirt. Inventions that inverted all happiness and peace had to be shunned. If they add to human dignity, let us have them. If they destroy human life in the minimum of time, call it the device of Satan. I call Charkha a spiritual device. I can speak away on the spinning wheel for any length of time. As you said, it is the pivot round which every one of my activities revolves.

"The problem is thus as incredibly simple as the spinning wheel itself."

Then there were the questions and answers as usual. Mr. Hobbes is the Club's jester.

Mr. Hobbes : "Mr. Gandhi has ignored 14000 miles of irrigation canals. He is a crank. ( President : 'Order' ) It's impossible to look back upon the past as a golden age. ( order ). Over-population is the real problem."

President : "We give Mr. Hobbes a certain amount of latitude but not to anybody else."

Weston : "Some one said I am going to give him a second wind. No. The urgent problem is when his villager has spun, what can it be done with? It is not a token coin. The next step is to weave it into Khadi. But if the handloom is complimentary to Charkha, why not use millspun yarn? I cannot understand the significance of the spinning wheel as an economic proposition."



A : "A relevant question. I thought I had sufficiently answered it by touching upon weaving. It does not require any effort to weave hand-spun yarn. Thousands are even now weaving hand-spun yarn. And what are spinners to do, if weavers use mill-spun ? Millions cannot weave. Weavers are a class by themselves. Our problem is to deal with millions. If the speaker rules out spinning, I want him to find out an occupation for millions of homes. Machine-spun took away their bread. I am trying to arm them with the means of bread. Spun yarn too has a market value. At Feni there is a market where hundreds of maunds of hand-spun yarn are sold. As time progresses it must be evenly spun. Be it remembered that thousands and thousands of yards of cloth left these shores before anyone knew the use of the machine."

Dr. Sarvadhikari : "Does Mr. Gandhi not know that spinning is still a living occupation ? That widows may be found who spin ? The Charkha is living as a part of the marriage ritual, but not as an occupation. Does he not know that spun yarn has a place in other rituals ? How is it then that, none the less, the industry has fallen into disuse ? Is it not because of the cost ? How will he reduce the cost ? How is he to cheapen the product ?"

A : "This is an equally interesting question. It involves the spiritual aspect also. I would briefly answer that, if I had the authority of Queen Elizabeth, I would deal with it as she did. She used her own country's cloth and made it criminal to use Holland-lace—till she imported Holland lacers, who were required to teach their art to Englishmen. That was a simple question. I am not a free trader, but an out-and-out protectionist. Free trade is ruinous for us.

"And how was it that this industry died ? It is a painful answer, but I must give it. It was made to die. I can give you a review of the East India Company to show what devices were used to kill the national industry of India. It would make one's blood boil. Weavers had to cut off their

thumbs to save themselves from forced labour. This simple fact is enough to show what protection was given to the national industry. You are asking, 'Is not charkha alive?' I wish I could say, 'yes'. It is now being revived, but they have given up the charkha. The symbol may exist, but that is worth nothing. Every country has to organise its industries. It does not matter if people have to pay more for Khaddar. Indirect taxation is not felt and people are helplessly driven to it. You, trustees, will have to put service before self and teach people to feel that they should not buy Manchester calico, when they can produce their cloth. If I could get state-aid and popular support, I would make it cheaper. But look at the history of the revived charkha. When Andhra Khadi was first sold in Bombay, it cost 17 annas per yard and yet they took it for their people at home. And now Khaddar I can give which can stand the scientific test of the Serampore Industrial Institution. Thank God I have workers who are sacrifice personified.

"And you cannot expect a nascent industry to flourish immediately and sell its product cheap, unless like beet-root sugar it is bountied. Then there is the case of a steamship company. It charged the deck passenger Rs. 10/- instead of the old charge of Rs. 91/- in order to beat down the new rival company. A healthy industry cannot stand that competition. You will, therefore, educate world opinion against any such immoral competition. Give me fair competition; I want no favour."

19-8-1925

#### Cuttack Tannery

It was only to see for himself Babu Madhusadan Das' tannery that Gandhiji visited Cuttack. Those who have read Gandhiji's speech on 'Cow-protection and its ways and means' may not have forgotten that the tannery question was not out of his mind. He thinks, if we had a national tannery, it would buy up dry and useless cows that are, at present, sold off to butchers, feed them till death, and then use their hides. What



attracted Gandhiji chiefly was Madhusudan Babu's assertion that he never bought slaughtered animals' hides from butchers for his factory. He personally showed Gandhiji round his factory and explained all the processes – the first of dipping the hide in a vat of lime immediately it was brought, then keeping it dipped in vats of definite chemical substances for 2 or 3 months so as to make it soft and pliable, and then tan it by means of a series of machines. He said he had two kinds of hides – those of domestic animals and wild beasts. The former comprised exclusively of dead animals and the latter of crocodiles, their young ones, deer, stags, tigers and leopards. There was one section that manufactured shoes etc.

The excellent product of the factory is attested by the fact that Madhusudan Babu gets orders for shoes etc. from even far-off foreign countries like England, Switzerland, and Belgium.

It is interesting to note the origin of this factory. Madhusudan Babu was a practising lawyer. He is 78 now. 30 years ago when he began to grow rich, he resolved to put his wealth to some good use. It struck him that he should start a new national industry. So he took up the study of tanning at the age of fifty. Then he went to England where he visited numerous leather factories. He proceeded to Germany and made a deeper study. And then, after his return here, he threw all his savings into the factory. He had employed Englishmen at first, but later on they demanded exorbitant salaries and were dismissed. All the 75 workers in the factory are now Indians. "Can you make shoes yourself?" inquired Gandhiji. "Definitely. Whenever there is some difficulty they run to me." "Will you not teach this profession to somebody that he can inherit it?" "He only can inherit who wants to learn it. But who cares?" "Suppose I come to you. Will you take me up as an apprentice? You know I am your son's age. I would definitely inherit your profession if I am taught." "Yes, I would gladly teach you." "And if you teach me, will you teach a representative sent by me?" "Certainly."

Madhusudan Babu then explained : "When I thought deeply over the choice of a profession I saw that India alone produced half the hides the world needed. I, therefore, thought we could beat the West in this industry and bring home some money besides. That was what made me select this profession."

"I feel highly encouraged in my hopes for my profession, since you could master yours at fifty," observed Gandhiji.

In reply to the address given by this institution Gandhiji said : "Should I thank you for your address? No. I should rather express my delight at the sight of so many so-called untouchables working here. I had even thought of coming to you last year. And when I went to Jamshedpur, I thought "Why not go to Cuttack as well?" But I could not—till now. After a round through this institution it struck me that I too should do my best in my line. It has been a matter of great pleasure to me to go where the so-called untouchables get such a good lift. May this institution, which is helping and raising those whom the Hindu community in its blindness, pride and vanity despises as untouchables, be happy and prosperous. I have every hope, untouchability is going to be destroyed. I am very glad indeed that Brahmins and others are working here in hearty collaboration."

A public meeting was held in the evening. It was very densely crowded. Moreover, it was raining heavily. Arrangements for an orderly meeting, therefore, broke down. Gandhiji said :

"That you have kept sitting even under this torrent shows your eagerness to hear me. I came to Orissa simply to see Madhubabu's institution. But I don't want to refer to it just now.

"Gopalbandhu ( a leading non-co-operator of the province ) stated that you wanted from me a word on Swaraj. You may not know that there is more poverty in Utkal than anywhere else in the whole of India. If you who live in Cuttack imagine that people in other places are as well-off as you, you are



mistaken. If you go to the interior, you will find people mere skin and bones. There is no flesh in their bodies, no lustre in their eyes. Animals have a better look in their eyes than they. What can Swaraj mean to these people ? Swaraj can have any meaning to them only if they get some food to eat. But if you content yourselves with giving them handfuls of rice, those doles come to nothing. Even if a man, unemployed for long months, gets something to eat, the food does not help him. The man who takes his food without performing a *yagna* ( sacrifice ) is a thief, a dacoit.<sup>1</sup> It is a *yagna* on our part when we take our food only after putting in some labour; that labour means some work for others. The man who cooks only for himself eats sin. Islam also says that one must offer *Qurbani* ( sacrifice ) for Swaraj. That means you must do some tangible work for Swaraj, undergo some renunciation. And there is only one thing which every one can do and that is to ply the spinning wheel. The man who takes his food without plying the spinning wheel is a thief, is unfit for Swaraj. Unless you spin, you, middle-class well-built men gathered here—cannot make those skeletons of Utkal spin. Patriotism lies in doing that work of practical sympathy. Tilak<sup>2</sup> Maharaj once said that there were mad men in India who thought that the Indian climate was not congenial and they should go abroad for a change of air. But this land of India is our mother. We sing

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1. Allusion to Gita III-12-13—"He who enjoys God's gifts without rendering aught unto them is verily a thief. 'Gods' must be taken to mean all creations of God. The service of all created beings is the service of the gods and the same is sacrifice."—"Gita According To Gandhi" by M. D. p. 173.

"*Yagna* is a word full of beauty and power...with the change of time its meaning is likely to grow and change. '*Yagna*' literally means worship; hence sacrifice; hence any sacrificial act or any act of service"—Gandhiji Ibid : p 173.

2. Lokamanya ( —'Beloved of the people ) B. G. Tilak, a staunch freedom-fighter who was sent to jail early in 1896 and thereafter, was the most popular Indian leader before non-co-operation. It was ushered in, in fact, on the day of his death as a mark of honour to him.

the *Bande-mataram*<sup>1</sup> song which addresses the land of our birth as mother. We call the man who quarrels with his mother a bad son, a despicable creature, and that man a worthy son who serves her.

"In what language can I express the grief of my heart ? If you all join in this Khadi work, you can produce Khadi for the whole of India. You leave your villages for settling in towns, become labourers and wage-earners, and indulge in gambling and drink. All that nuisance you readily put up with. But you never wish to remain in your homes and work ! How strange ! This is my warning : you will never get Swaraj unless you do this little thing. You must cease to talk of Swaraj, if you don't intend to do it. The idler—whether an individual or a nation—has no right to have Swaraj. He only is fit for Swaraj, who labours for it, who puts his time to some good use. Deshbandhu was one such. He died with the chant of Swaraj on his lips."

20 8-1925

Madhusudan Babu is a Christian, but nobody can make him out for one. He embraced Christianity when he was still a young man.

Gandhiji asked him the reason. "Immediately after I was enrolled a lawyer in Calcutta, I turned a Christian. When a man gives vent to such wonderful sentiments as, "God forgive them. They know not what they do," in the midst of tortures, he must be a very high soul indeed, I thought. It was that prayer which cast on me a spell for Jesus. I don't say that such sentiments are not expressed in other religions, but it was this utterance that impressed me the most."

"You don't find it difficult to mix with the people at large, because you are a Christian ?" asked Gandhiji.

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1. This song by Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterji became very popular during the agitation against the Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. As the Government had proscribed it, some people including boys had to suffer for singing it. It was sung as the National Anthem of the Congress on that account, till the present song replaced it.



Pointing his finger at the numerous friends around him he said, "Ask these people."

And really Madhusudan Babu is one with the people so completely, that they adore him and are not worried at all over the question of his different faith.

Madhusudan Babu invited Gandhiji to address the congregation in his Baptist church, which was packed to the full at the time. He has such a hold over this circle also, that that particular Christian society has adhered to Indian customs and manners. Urdu was the language used both in the welcome-address and the prayers. The President was Madhusudan Babu himself and he was dressed very simply in a dhoti and a shirt in Khadi. It was mostly a Christian audience and yet a large number wore the Indian costume. Gandhiji felt very happy over all this.

He said : "It is not for the first time that I have gone to a Baptist church. Mr. Doke of the Baptist Church of Johannesburg was one of my closest friends. He was the English pastor of the Englishmen and worked in that capacity at the English church there. I was invited to attend his funeral service in the church and they asked me to give them an oration in memory of the departed soul. In South Africa, and specially in Johannesburg, I was in such close contact with him and many other Christians that there might be hardly any Indian Christian who did not know me and whom I did not know. Christians often meet me in India also. When, therefore, Madhusudan Babu invited me to this church for an address, I felt very happy.

"I am asked to say something on the duty of the Indian Christian. I have dealt with the same subject earlier before Indian Christians in Calcutta and I shall say something today also.

"Your colleagues have made my work easy in a way, since all that I heard here was spoken in your mother tongue only. During my wanderings in India I have had some very painful experiences. Whenever I find a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Christian

giving up his mother-tongue and resorting to a foreign language in his dealings, I feel deeply grieved. The man who discards his mother tongue, gives up thereby his parents, his friends, his neighbours and his country as well. The man who is capable of snapping such ties of love become unfit for doing any good to humanity or to anybody whatever. And the man unfit to serve the world is unfit to know or serve God. Hence even in my religious discourses I do not fail to state that all business must be conducted in the mother-tongue only. Even for a religious talk I stress the same point, because religious knowledge can be given only in the mother-tongue of the people. As regards even the Bible, questions were raised whether it should be taught through Latin or Greek or through English, because it sometimes used expressions that were mystical in character.

“Now the next thing. During my travels in India, I find a general belief that to turn a Christian is to turn a European, to become self-willed and give up self-restraint, use only foreign cloth, dress oneself in European style and start taking meat and brandy. But I think the fact, is, if a person discards his country, his customs and his old connections and manners when he changes his religion, he becomes all the more unfit to gain a knowledge of God. For, a change of religion means really a conversion of the heart. When there is a real conversion, the man’s heart grows. But in this country one finds that conversion brings about deep disdain for one’s old religion and its followers, i. e., one’s old friends and relatives. The next change that takes place is that of dress and manners and behaviours. All this does great harm to the country. In my view your object in changing your religion should be to bring about the prosperity of your country.

“Regarding this matter, I give you an instance to show how difficult it is to talk to Christian brothers and sisters even on an elementary matter. It is as much your duty as mine to serve the poor. Nowhere in the whole country there is as much poverty as in Utkal. Those of you who do not know will be



sorry to learn that the population of the province is actually decreasing and poverty increasing day by day. Famine infests the land regularly every year. There are some rich men who believe that distribution of handfuls of rice to these miserables is an act of holy charity that wins for them the grace of God. But I consider them crazy, because the root cause of the beggary and hunger of the masses is want of an occupation that can feed them. And every religion lays down the law that man, whom God has given hands and feet, must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. What work then can we give to these our submerged brothers and sisters? They don't get even 4 pice ( i. e. 1 anna =  $1/16$ th of a rupee ) per day at present. That is what has made me put before Bharat one big religious idea—the turning of a machine, by name the spinning wheel. I wish you begin to spin on it. Unless you do so, you cannot teach the art to your poor brothers and sisters and set them to spin.

“How is it that, owing to your conversion, I find it very difficult to convince you of the truth of this simple idea? I wonder why you find it hard to accept it. Not that every Hindu brother or sister listens to me, but, by and large, I think, Hindus accept my plea more readily than Christians. But it is my dearly cherished hope that you Christians will regard spinning as your religious duty as much and as readily as the Hindus do. And if we mean to ply the wheel, it is but the next natural step that we ourselves use its product.

“But I find it difficult to convince you of the wisdom of this very simple step. Right today I was explaining the matter to a Christian sister. But she said, “Thick Khadi is very heavy to wear.” Can you imagine Jesus giving the cold shoulder, if He were told by somebody, “Khadi will help the poor. Will you wear it?” Can you rightfully say, ‘Yes, we are prepared to be kind to the poor, but we won't use the product of the one little implement that saves them from starvation?’ I have spoken at all this length in order to urge you to spin and wear Khadi for the sake of the poor who are reduced to beggary.

“There is one thing still left out. Christian friends tell me

that when they change their faith, there remains no need for them to observe any restraint. They say, 'You can do anything you like when you become a Christian.' I respectfully say that this is a wrong notion. I shall give you an instance to prove my contention. There is a common belief that while some food is forbidden and some allowed in Hinduism, once you become a Christian, you get a licence to eat anything you like and drink even liquor. Hence, there are a lot of Christians who disregard their neighbours' feelings and do what they like at the cost of hurting them. But I was told the other day that the Bible itself condemns such conduct. Christianity goes so far as to say, 'If you eat a thing your neighbours don't like, give it up, but don't ride roughshod over your neighbour's sentiments ( Romans XIV ).'

"I am grateful to you for hearing me with such patience and respect. I have said what I have, in friendliness and love. I have not come here to pass strictures on anybody. I don't wish to live in this world simply to criticise others. It is my cardinal faith that every religion on earth contains some truth or other. I am also convinced that there is no religion on earth that can claim perfection. The reason is that man is an imperfect individual and his interpretation of a religion, whatever it be, is not and cannot be perfect. But my close study of all religions has taught me one thing, namely, truth, compassion, love and non-violence have been exalted in all of them. Truth and mercy are one and the same thing. That is no religion which does not give them prime importance. God is Truth, God is Love. He who disregards truth and compassion and takes God's name with his tongue is only a prater. I am sure you have been told that he is a true believer in God who does His work and not he who only says 'Lord, Lord', but does no practical good to others. If you accept this principle as the testing balance of character, you are certain to find that the action ( spinning ) I have pleaded for is the right one.

"God bless you."

Though our stay at Cuttack was very short, something



could be done for the All India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. There are a very few Gujarati ( Kutchi ) families in Cuttack, but when an appeal was made, they gave a good response and contributed Rs. 513 in all.

24-8-1925

Finished Anatole France's novel "Thais." It reminds one of our story of Gorakh and Machhandar ( the disciple Gorakh surpasses the Guru in spiritual attainment ). Thais was a prostitute and this man— her chastiser—a hypocrite. Hearing herself condemned by this monk who personally was full of pride, lust, and want of faith, Thais gives up at one stroke her luxurious life and her enchanting beauty and youth and runs to God for refuge. She becomes a nun and realises God. But the monk himself goes to perdition. Some of the sentences in the book deserve to be treasured :

@ "Even death has not un-deceived them; for it is very plain that it does not suffice merely to die in order to see God. Those who are ignorant of truth while living will be ignorant of it always."

When he sets ablaze all the vanities of Thais the monk says :

@ "Thais, all that thou hast touched must be devoured by the fire, even to its very soul. Thanks be to Heaven, these tunics and veils which have seen kisses more innumerable than the waves of the sea, will only feel now the lips and tongues of the flame."

Thais raises no objection to everything that is being thrown into the fire, but for a statuette of Eros, she says :

@ "Remember, Father, that this child is Love and he should not be harshly treated. Believe me, Love is a virtue and if I have sinned, it is not through him, my father, but against him. Never shall I regret aught that he has caused me to do, and I deplore only those things, I have done contrary to his commands. He does not allow women to give themselves to those who do not come in his name. For that reason he ought to be honoured."

@ "Faith, Fear, and Love—saviours.

Pride, Lust and Doubt—destroyers.

Thais entered a nunnery, performed severe penances and was redeemed. The monk chanced to come up just in time when she was dying. Referring to her the Mother Superior said :

@ "She was an example to them by the modesty of her acts and words and seemed like a statue of purity amongst them. When I saw that she was really drawn towards God by faith, hope, and love, I did not hesitate to employ her talent and even her beauty for the improvement of her sisters. I asked her to represent before us the actions of the famous women and wise figures of the scriptures. She acted Esther, Deborah, Judith, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Not all souls are sanctified in the same way. It must also not be forgotten that Thais gave herself to God while she was still beautiful, and such a sacrifice is, if not unexampled, at least very rare."

When she was dying Thais said :

@ "Two angels come to me. They draw near. How beautiful they are ! I see God."

And that monk ?

@ "They had seen the monk's face and they fled in affright, crying : 'A Vampire ! A vampire !' He had become so repulsive, that passing his own hand over his face, he felt his own hideousness."

The following speech was delivered before the Y. M. C. A. in Calcutta on 25. 8. 1925.

@ "I didn't know that I had to speak on 'Value and Possibility of Personality.' My diary showed me that I was speaking on 'Village Organisation.' Letters do not come to me directly and come rarely the same day. But we have come to a compromise. I shall speak incidentally on the subject of village organisation.

"The word 'personality' puzzled me a little. I suppose you mean character. All religions are bound up with character and



as an humble student of religion—one who tries to reduce religion to practice—I came in contact with one word 'satsang.'<sup>1</sup> One of my favourite books is a commentary on the value of personality, by which I mean 'satsang.' Bhartrihari—king, philosopher, poet rolled in one—says, 'What will not satsang do?'<sup>2</sup> Translate the word into 'character' and you get an address anybody can give on the subject. For, satsang then means 'Live character.' It is a sermon daily given by those who sum up what character should be in their own lives. Purity of public life before anything else is, therefore, an indispensable essential and a nation which disregards purity of public life is a nation going down to perdition.

"Village organisation seems to you to be a simple word, but is not so simple, because India is predominantly rural. Sir Henry Maine has left a work on the subject which everybody may treasure. He has given a true picture of our village communes and shown to us and to the world that the village life of India is what it was 5,000 years ago. This does not imply that we are barbarous. On the contrary the writer has made it plain and clear that this village life has so much vitality and character, that it has persisted throughout all these long years and weathered many a storm. These villages he has described as village-republics, self-contained, having all that can be aspired to—schools, arbitration boards, sanitation etc. There was not a poor law, but there was provision for relief of poverty. He speaks of her arts—beautiful arts of India—represented in villages. Treasures of art we owe to the genius of the Indian villager. He learnt from his parents by word

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1. It is a word made up of 'sat'—existence or truth and sang—contact or attachment. So, 'satsang' means contact with saints, good or holy books, sermon, contemplation of the Self or God even. The usual meaning is company of a saint.

2. Startled at the discovery of the faithlessness of his queen whom king Bharthriari adored, he renounced his kingdom, became a *sannyasi* and wrote beautiful verses in Sanskrit. Two of his books 'Niti Shataka' (a hundred verses on morality) and 'Vairagya Shataka,' (a hundred verses on dispassion) are very popular to this day.

of mouth all wisdom he should learn. In daily contact he was able to realize the value and possibility of personality. The village headman was not the imposter of today. He was the servant of people whom you could go to in times of difficulty. Children could surround him. Everyone knew him, he was incorruptible, he was a gentleman.

"This is all a fairy tale you will say. But if you go to the villages, you will find such a one also—but now he is a rare bird.

"What has come over this land that all these beautiful things are not to be found everywhere, that, instead of these villages being self-contained, as they were 200 years ago, are dependent for the very necessities of life on Bombay, Lancashire or Japan? The villager is no more a member of a happy republic and he feels the pinch. Village-life is broken. Villagers are dying by millions of malaria, hookworm, etc.—all diseases brought about by insanitation, deep poverty, sloth, and idleness. I was going to put idleness first. Idle hands will ever find some mischief still to do. I do not think I should quote from history that India, even as it is, is still living.

"This downward tendency is a modern encumbrance. What created this division and brought about this downfall? You may search the records of the East India Company. Ruthlessly the village-system was broken up by every means fair or foul, foul rather than fair. The testimony is not mine, but of those who served the East India Company faithfully, but who could not withhold things from the world. They have left an unperishable record of how injustice, bribery, corruption reigned supreme and how deliberately the arts of India were ruined.

"They ( the people of India ) were agriculturists largely. A novice will say it is impossible for an agriculturist to live without a supplementary occupation. Why should a man flooded be absolutely stranded and live on charity? I have known the effects of flood in South Africa. No relief was necessary. They had not to be fed by the State. They worked,



they had savings to fall back upon. Here they have no work and no savings. His income, records saved show us, is far below his necessity. Land does not occupy him all the time. There are 6 months of unemployment in Bengal.

“How is this to be remedied ? That is the problem before the village organisation worker. And he must make the power of personality felt. I say, ‘Go with your character to the villages, and express it through some loving act of yours. It will be instinctively, understood and responded to.’ Let any man who has a character to save go to any village and he will get response. But he will have to be patient and truthful. There is no character where there is no patience or truth or *ahimsa* ( non-violence ). He should be gentle and truthful. He will not go as the patron-saint of the villagers. They will say, ‘We have patron-saints of trees and stones. You hurt us. So you will have to go with humility, with a broom in your hand. You will find the causes of hookworm etc. I can refer you to Dr. Bantick to find out the causes of malaria. He will tell you how villagers are unable to respond to the laws of modern requirement. But you may dismiss from your minds that all this ( diseases etc. ) is a new thing. Living blood of living men reacts on germs and destroys them. But idleness, insanitation and poverty—this Trinity of Evil—the people cannot stand. So you will go with brooms. Villagers might not respond quickly. You will have to show them how all these things can be dealt with in a proper manner. You will convert night-soil into golden manure, give them quinine and castor-oil. You will examine the youngsters, look at their teeth and then at their clothes. Children will be his who does all this. And so you march onward.

“I have summed up everything. But I have left my favourite thing. For, after you have prepared the ground, made them clean, there would be time hanging heavy on your hands. Take up this thing ( *takli* ) the spinning top. It will convert the hungry, whilst you are working away like this ( showing it

by turning the takli ). Children will also respond to your takli.

"But without character there is no village organisation. You must come down from the pedestal we occupy and stoop to conquer. You will have to incur the risk of catching malaria yourself. With all that, the work will give you all the satisfaction your soul can desire. It will add to the wealth of India. It will enrich their life and your life."

28-8-1925

Many institutions took advantage of Gandhiji's presence in Calcutta. One of them organised a musical concert in the Over-tone Hall in aid of the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. Gandhiji was invited to speak on "Race-hatred and nationalism."

"You have adroitly escaped paying a compliment to me. You are not guilty of race-hatred, as you showed it by garlanding this girl. But the younger generation in India is face to face with this problem : 'Is it possible to love one's country and not to hate the country whose domination we dislike from the bottom of our heart ?' The answer from many a young man has been, 'It is impossible not to hate.' Some express it in broad daylight and some translate it into action. Many harbour it in secret and feed upon that opinion.

"I have been a student of this problem not since 1915, but ever since I entered public life, i. e., since 1894. I have come deliberately to the conclusion that love of one's country is perfectly consistent with love of those whose rule I do not like. I was connected then with the Natal Government, later the Transvaal Government and later still with the Union Government of South Africa. I am fully conversant with the disabilities of Indians in that sub-continent. They are enough to make one hate one's fellow being, if one did not preserve one's sanity. You find there injustice rampant for no cause save that you have not the same colour of skin. There shall be no equality between the white and coloured races—so runs the constitution. It was once an article of the Transvaal Government only, but it has been adopted by the Union Government now.



“In India you find much the same thing. Further, you come to find that your love of the country varies inversely with your love of the ‘tiger.’ It is beside the point whether you are correct or incorrect. You are labouring under a grossest form of tyranny and injustice. How shall you love the tiger (tyrant) ?

“It is not love—love is a positive force—, but as you said, is hatred essential ? You may not love. But must you also hate ? Some I know who consider it one’s duty to hate the tyrant. They cite the disastrous wars in Europe, wars they learnt of in history. They cite laws. Society sends to gallows, they say, those who are guilty of murder. One would prize one’s own people’s reformation even if they are guilty of murder, and yet, it is said, society will break if the law of sanctions were withdrawn. With this thought young men say, ‘Without hatred of the enemy you cannot love your country.’

“They are labouring under the grossest ignorance. So long as you labour under that attitude, progress will be retarded. The world is weary of hate. We see fatigue overcoming Western nations. We see this song of hate has not benefited humanity. Let it be the privilege of India to turn a new leaf and give a lesson to the world. Is it becoming that three hundred millions of people should hate one hundred thousand Englishmen ? That is how I would put it concretely. It is derogatory to our dignity to nurse hatred towards any Englishman. That does not mean you should put up with wrong. Distinguish between evil and the evil-doer. Hate the first and not the second. We are full of evil and we should be forgiving to others. Heaven knows, no one can claim to have spoken as fiercely and fearlessly of the misdeeds of Englishmen, of their corruption, as I. But my love of those who consider themselves my enemies does not blind me to their or my faults.

“If I am true to myself, to humanity, I must say I must understand all faults flesh is heir to. I must understand the vices of my opponents.

“Brute-forces have been handed down from generation to generation. We have found what it has done for the world. The glamour of European civilization does not dazzle me. I scratched and found nothing beneath the surface. I am talking of the predominant character of modern civilization. It is exploitation of the weaker races. It means to dethrone God and enthrone materialism. I have not hesitated to call the system of Government Satanic. But I know, I shall not successfully deal with it if I devise means to punish the evil-doer. My means is gentlest handling to convert them—Satyagraha. Many who call themselves Satyagrahis do not deserve the name. They have done violence to their creed. Non-co-operation is non-co-operation with evil and not with the evil-doer. I know this is difficult. But I don't want to go into the whole doctrine. I can commend to you what has gone on for the last 4 or 5 years and see that non-co-operation consists in hating evil and not the evil-doer.

“I would ask you to extend the law we apply to domestic relations to political relations between the rulers and the ruled. What does a father do? He simply does not encourage his son in doing evil and does not hate him. So if we cease to think of evil it will die of inanition. We tolerate evil out of a false sense of love. I am not talking of the blind love of doting father on an evil-doing son. I am talking of the love that discriminates, the intelligent love, blind not to a single fault of the son, the love of the reformer.

“But why talk of relation between two races? Think of the relations between Hindus and Hindus. How shall we deal with the evil rampant in Hinduism? Shall we cut off the heads of those who believe in untouchability? The secret is self-suffering. We shall not mend evil by doing violence to those who persist in evil. Take Vyakom (where a Satyagraha was carried on for allowing untouchables the use of public roads surrounding the walls of the temple there). It occurs to me because it is a finished example. The young men working there have not erred by a hair's breadth. They have kept their record absolutely



clean. In Travancore untouchability has lost its foot-hold because of the patient courage of the youths who have suffered interminable suffering.

"So race-hatred is not necessary. Race-hatred will kill nationalism. I do not want *freedom of India if it means extinction of England or Englishmen*. I want freedom of my country so that the resources of my country may be applied to the benefit of mankind. When we indulge in provincialism, we miss the true spirit of nationalism. That is nationalism when I am extinct as a Gujarati. But if I prepare Gujarat so that Gujarat may die for the whole of India, I am a true nationalist and a true Gujarati as well. My idea of nationalism is that my country be so free that it may die for the world. There is no room for race hatred in it. Let that be our nationalism."

After the speech ended, the Curator of the Imperial Library, Mr. Chapman, blurted out in excitement :

@ "If I say to Frenchmen, 'Your flooding our country is intolerable,' there is no race-hatred. But India is full of race-hatred. There may be no hatred in you against me. There may be only intellectual opposition. You are advocating moral perfection which man is incapable of. When Indians demand political freedom and equality without being fit for them, does it not create race-hatred?"

The substance of his argument was that there would be no talk of driving out the British if there were no race-hatred in Indians and that the Englishmen were remaining in India for India's good—for only teaching self-government to Indians.

Gandhiji gave an answer that was a slap in the questioner's face :

G : "No. I have said that race-hatred is not essential for nationalism. But the deduction that I should tolerate the British rule, so long as I do not show my capacity for self-rule, is unwarranted. I shall develop that capacity by resistance to the system. The speaker was unconsciously betrayed into race-prejudice. I was talking of race-hatred with respect to

nationalism. The Englishmen are possessed of the idea of the superiority of their race and firmly hold the view that they can manage the affairs of the world. That is an opinion my life is dedicated to fight against. Unless they are dislodged from that position, there is no peace in India or for weaker races. I am not striving for perfection in human nature. I only say that as between race and race they should apply the same law as we apply between ourselves. The world is tired of race-hatred. It is the absolute right of India to misgovern herself. My heart rebels against a foreigner imposing on me a peace called *Pax Brittanica*. My force is far more potent than brute-force."

In his closing speech the President remarked :

@ "He ( Mr. Gandhi ) seems to combine more than any other man an ardent, fervent, almost militant patriotism with an entire absence of race-hatred."

Gandhiji left Bengal at last on 1-9-1925, the date he had fixed as the deadline for collecting the Deshbandhu Memorial. Sri Manilal Kothari came up from Gujarat and relieved Gandhiji of half his burden. He managed to draw out Rs. 1000 from the man who had contributed Rs. 51, Rs. 2500 from one who had promised Rs. 500 and, by the captivating charm of his love, made Jaajuram Sheth raise his figure from Rs. 7500 to as many as Rs. 25000 ! But Bengali rich men remained rigidly unresponsive to the magnetism either of Gandhiji or Sri Manilal. Visits to them gave us ample opportunities to realize how indifferent they were about the fund. Their want of faith in the capacity of the workers of their own province was one reason for this immovable apathy. All the same, the total amounted to nearly 8 lakhs and this was due to the enthusiastic support of the lower, middle and poor classes of Bengal. There was not a single day when even a few money-orders and registered letters were not received. Some men sent their small instalments of contribution eight or even ten times. The owner of a vegetable shop in the new market gave away Rs. 750. The students also rose to the occasion. Many schools and colleges in Calcutta and



other mofussil schools gave contributions that could be termed excellent. But everyone acknowledges that the subscriptions of Gujaratis and Marwaris were the most remarkable. The total of the former came to sixty to sixtyfive thousands and of the latter to two or two and a half lakhs. That is a record for which both these communities can be legitimately proud.

In reply to a letter Gandhiji wrote :

“I have your letter. He is a perfect man who has risen above human weaknesses ( is ‘nirvikari’—without any change from the pristine state of purity ). That means he is entirely free from attachment and aversion. That man remains entirely tranquil and unruffled at the sight of a most beautiful damsel, does not give up truth even if the heavens fall, and forgives the man who ruins him or even his daughter. The sentence you quote from the Gita (Bhagwad Gita) reveals the truth. Only a perfect man speaks in that strain.

“In a sense I know who I am, in another I don’t. In our essence we all are undoubtedly one. At present, however, let alone be my variance with the world, I don’t know how far away I may be from even you.”

Gandhiji reached Ahmedabad on 5-9-1925 and visited the ‘Mahajan’ ( Labour Association ) of Anasuyabehn ( she was one of the first in the whole of India to organise mill-labourers ). Some of the figures given in the report of the schools conducted by that Association are noteworthy. The Mahajan conducted 8 day-schools last year, but now there are 9—6 exclusively for untouchables, 1 for Mussalmans, and 2 for other classes’ children. There were 11 night-schools last year, but there are 15 now, comprising of 8 for untouchables, 5 for Mussalmans, 1 for Vaghris ( a low-caste Hindu community ) and 1 for all classes in general. Out of 1186 students at the beginning of the year 798 were untouchables and 219 other Hindus, 109 Muslims and 60 Vaghris. The average attendance was 907. 92. The total number of students has now gone up to 1285. Spinning is a compulsory subject in addition to the usual subjects taught in other primary schools. An attempt was made

to use spinning wheels but it was given up for want of sufficient space and taklis were substituted. After only two months' experiment, 300 children now know takli-spinning. At the time of Gandhiji's visit all the children were spinning and their yarn was good. Their rate of spinning on takli is 30 to 40 yards an hour. They have already spun 88 pounds' weight of yarn. The number of teachers last year was 60 and is now 77. The total annual expense for these schools was 22000 rupees out of which Rs. 15000 were contributed from that portion of the Tilak Swaraj Fund which was subscribed by the Millowners' Association. Moreover, Sri Vrijavallabhdas Jekisandas donated Rs. 60 per month. There is a hostel which has 16 untouchable children. They are learning sliver-making, hand-spinning and hand-weaving. They spun 50 lbs. of yarn and wove 125 yards of Khadi last year.

Gandhiji's address at the gathering :

"I have heard your report and I congratulate you. During my tours in the country, I take care to visit such schools. I note particularly the communities that attend them and the kind of education imparted. I must say, I have not found anywhere else schools as well-conducted as those here. Don't think I am saying this from any prejudice in favour of your institution. There is, indeed, a possibility of my having it but even after considering that factor and giving it due allowance I cannot but adhere to my highest regard for your schools.

"However, I give you these congratulations not in order that you may be puffed up, but to enable you to bear my adverse comments. My dharma lies more in pointing out your faults than in appreciating your merits. I can see that you are attempting to maintain cleanliness. But I want such a high standard as would delight my eyes. I was shocked to find dirt in that little girl's nails. That is *adharma* (fall from duty). I hope there is a regular roll-call. But so long as every child's nails, teeth, etc. are not examined daily, you cannot say you maintain the presence record completely. Bad teeth and dirty nails bring about perhaps more disease than anything else.



Teeth and nails are very useful parts in the body and it is easy to keep them clean and free from germs. 'Doing one's best' is no use here. You must keep them perfectly clean. The next in importance is the cleanliness of the nose and eyes. It is necessary to look into the good condition of hair also. Once the teachers start paying attention to all these things, the children themselves will grow particular about them.

"I congratulate you on your work in takli-spinning. I think no other national school has made as much progress. As regards takli in schools, let me support your experience by mine. The attempt to introduce spinning wheels in schools was in its very nature wrong. The wheel does not possess the power of the takli. The latter can successfully carry out the boycott of foreign cloth, even if the spinning wheel is destroyed root and branch. The wheel has this trouble : Shortly after you join a broken piece of thread, it snaps again and this rejoining and breaking continues indefinitely. A Cottage is the right place for the wheel and a school the right place for the takli. It is a useful and productive top.

"I congratulate you also for the very large number of students. If millowners do not support such schools it is they who are unfortunate, and if they increase their number it is they who gain in prestige. I would even say it is their duty to do so. I am deeply grieved to learn that they are going to stop the aid of Rs. 1200 given till now to the schools from the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Renewal of the grant is a must for the mill-owners. But, over and above that aid, they should give other kinds of help and put Anasuyabehn at ease. The millowners have got in her a servant who refuses to take any salary. What shall I say about the rich men who don't utilize the services of such a voluntary worker ?

( What follows in Shri Mahadevbhai's manuscript diary is abstruse and scrappy. The following is, therefore, reproduced from "Prajabandhu" ( a Gujarati Weekly ) of d. 13-9-1925 in order to understand the subsequent proceedings of the meeting—Editor, 'Mahadevbhai's Diary' in Gujarati )

"And now I wish to say something to the little boys and girls here :

Gandhiji : "Do you know Sri Gordhanbhai Patel ? He belongs to Sri (afterward Sardar) Vallabhbhai Patel's caste. Do you know who this Vallabhbhai is ?"

A Child : "A Patel ( —a member of a leading peasant community )."

Gandhiji : "Patel or barber ? He who removes dirt is called either a barber (sic. a barber is a touchable low caste Hindu who used to be employed by the municipality as a street-lamp-lighter) or a scavenger. Vallabhbhai is doing the work of cleaning streets etc. (of the municipality) and Gordhanbhai also belongs to his caste."

A Child : "Gordhanbhai is a mill-owner."

Gandhiji : "You are to tell him respectfully, 'If you give us the grant, we shall bless you.' The next thing I want to tell you is : 'Wear Khadi.' Do you know what Khadi means ?"

A Child : "Hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. "

Gandhiji : "Do you know why you should wear Khadi ? But that's a thing above your head."

A Child : "For Swaraj."

Gandhiji : "Why Khadi and no other cloth for Swaraj ? Those who live in villages, don't have sufficient food to eat. If they take to weaving cloth, they can get a livelihood. You must, moreover, keep clean. Mussalmans know that without washing one's arms and face, they cannot do their *namaz*."

"The Arab sailor always scrapes his teeth. That is why Somali Arabs are healthy and handsome. You can't say that a black-skinned man is never handsome !

"God is a great watch-maker. It is He who makes this ticking watch ( human life ) go on. Dhed ( untouchables ) children are sitting on my lap ( — I have adopted dhed children ). They must, therefore, be all the more clean. In



short, I wish your tongue, your heart, and your body also to be *pak* ( — holy or pure ).”

The figures showing the progress of the work of the Majur Mahajan are as remarkable as those of its schools. An annual meeting was held in the evening of 6.9. 1925 under ‘the memorable bawal’ tree (—the place of Gandhiji’s historic fast in 1919 in support of the mill workers’ strike ). Two of the mill-owners, Sheth Ambalal Sarabhai and Sheth Gordhanbhai Patel, were present at the meeting. The Majur Mahajan’s membership was 14000 and its income 25000 rupees. Every department in the mill industry is represented in the Mahajan and these representatives held 74 meetings last year. The officers of the Mahajan organised 130 meetings during the year in the various mills’ compounds during recess periods. The Mahajan attended to 743 complaints and yet not even once were they compelled to advise the aggrieved mill workers to go on a strike. It has opened a Savings Bank to induce mill workers to economise and save something for a rainy day. It spent Rs. 10, 668 in giving loans on low rates of interest and thus saved many workers from usury amounting even to 200% interest in some cases. The Mahajan conducts an excellent Hospital in which there is a Maternity Ward and special other facilities for women patients. It sold Khadi worth Rs. 2,662 to the mill workers and cereals at cost price worth Rs. 17,000. It has opened a department for research into the economic and social conditions of the workers. That department inquired into the conditions of nearly 2000 families and there is chance of many reforms taking place among mill workers as a result of the inquiry. The Mahajan had made an earnest request to the mill owners to assist them in this inquiry, though it regards that work as more its own than that of the employers. The report particularly emphasises the fact that the aim of the employees will ever be that of satisfying their employers, whatever the circumstances of the workers be.

Gandhiji gave his view of the problem in a terse sentence : “Satisfy your employers with your excellent work and **compel**

them to accept your demands from the self-respect you gain thereby.' It is a pleasure to note that in the course of narrating his complaints, one mill worker admitted, "In view of the depression in the industry, there is absolutely no basis for demanding a higher pay. It will satisfy us if the mill owners only implement the awards already made by the arbitration board." This attitude delighted Gandhiji and he declared in his speech :

"I am very glad to find that you understand the impropriety of demanding higher wages in these hard times for mill owners. At this rate of growth of mutual understanding, it is not impossible that a time may come when workers will come forward to tell their employer, 'We are prepared to work the machines without getting any pay whatever.' But I know the present situation is different. You are labouring under many injustices and have many complaints to make against your employers. All the same, I would certainly wish that a happy relationship as exemplified in the instance given by me subsisted between you and them."

Explaining the causes of the failure of some former strikes Gandhiji said : "The reason for their failure lay in the fact that they were undertaken without a proper understanding of the essential requisites of a successful strike.

"The mill worker must have a second string to his bow, i.e., some other occupation over and above his work in the mill. He ought to possess, as an indispensable requisite, a spinning-wheel or a handloom or some other thing that brings him extra income."

Gandhiji held long consultations with the secretary of the Millowners' Association also. He recommended the provision of the admirable amenities supplied by the Tata Company at Jamshedpur to its employees, like those of good drinking water, excellent drainage etc. The Secretary promised immediate and full payment of the last three months' arrears in the grants given to the Majur Mahajan's schools and agreed to redress,



after proper inquiry, complaints against inadequate facilities of water, lavatories etc., and defective machines.

Extract from 'Life of Tolstoy' by P. Birukor :

@ "Blame me—I do that myself—but blame me and not the path I tread and show to those who ask me where, in my opinion, the road lies. If I know the road home, and go along it drunk, staggering from side to side, does that make the road along which I go a wrong one? If it be wrong, show me another; if I have lost my way and stagger, help me and support me in the right path, as I am ready to support you; and do not baffle me and do not rejoice that I have gone astray, and do not delightedly exclaim : 'Look at him ! He says he is going home and yet he goes into a bog !' Do not rejoice at that but help me and support me.

"For, indeed, you are not devils out of the bog, but you are also men going home. See, I am alone, and I cannot wish to fall into the bog. Help me. My heart breaks with despair that we have gone astray; and when I struggle with all my strength, you at every failure—instead of pitying yourselves and me—flurry me and cry in ecstasy : 'See he is following us into the bog !'

"So that is my relation to the teaching and to its practice. With all my might I try to practise it and at every failure I not merely repent, but beg for help to enable me to perform it and I gladly meet and listen to any one who like myself is seeking the road."—Tolstoy.

As high-lighted by the Press we embarked on a steamer from Bombay for our visit to Cutch. Sri Vallabhbhai Patel, Sri Laxmidas Asar, his wife and his daughter joined Gandhiji from Bombay, but Sri Manilal Kothari was accompanying him right from Sitapur in U. P. As he had spent his childhood in Bhuj ( capital of the then native State of Cutch ) Manilal claimed to be a Cutchi himself and on that ground had gone so far up as Sitapur to invite and escort Gandhiji to Cutch. As though it were an omen of the troubles ahead, when we were still in

the steamer, two or three men inquired, "Is that Laxmi"—that girl over there by the side of Gandhiji?" Those who did not actually put that question must have taken it for granted that Gandhiji, who had taken Laxmi with him last year to Bhavanagar, would surely bring her to Cutch also.

Our arrival was thus greeted by many with an element of surprise, suspicion and fear. To add to this there was with us Sri Vallabhbhai with his habit of laughing out the blues with pranks. It is difficult to imagine the situation that all this led us into. At one of our halts we were very deliberately given quite a separate room for our meal and served not in the usual brass vessels but in leaf-dishes and leaf-bowls, so that even their vessels might not be polluted by our use. Just then Vallabhbhai, assuming a very serious air, introduced Krishnadas (Gandhiji's nephew in fact) to the servers in the following terms: "But do you know why this whole party is attending upon him with such particular care? Because he is a Dhed (an untouchable) and Dheds you know, are such hot favourites of Gandhiji! That's what makes the whole party cringe on him."

The servers, poor men, were shocked and stopped serving us. And once Vallabhbhai is at it, he knows how to keep up the joke he begins. All our efforts to remove from the servers' minds the suspicion that Krishnadas was not an untouchable came to nothing.

That was the kind of the group which left for Cutch. On the way lay Dwarka, where we halted, had the darshan of the Lord of Dwarka (Lord Sri Krishna) and received the greetings of the people. Then we got down at the God-forsaken port, Mandvi, on the morning of the 22nd. From the steamer we got into a State steam-launch, then into a small boat, and then into a bullock cart.

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1. Daughter of Dudhabhai, an untouchable gentleman, who with his family were welcomed by Gandhiji as inmates of his Ashram. The step created domestic and financial crises for the Ashram which were overcome by Gandhiji's love and providential help.



"Why," we wondered, "does this port of Mandvi now wear this desolate look, when it was formerly so famous for its wonderful ships and merchant-princes and their thriving business with Zanzibar and Arabia? Why did the Maharao (the title of the king of Cutch) allow this port's traditional glory to fade when he believed in the maxim, 'Old is gold,' and insisted on keeping his State miles apart from Western civilization and Western railways?" Engrossed in such thoughts, as we were wading through water and then through mud formed from shallower water, one Cutchi friend blurted out, "Here is a feast for your eyes—this mud of our State, Cutch!" "But it is to let him see that and wash it out that you have brought Mahatmaji here," added one who belonged to that fallen Mandvi itself; and then turning to Gandhiji he said, "And now that you have come, please see that this mud, this stinking dirt, is removed completely. Give us both—the Rao and his people—some potent charm that may change the whole face of Cutch." But Gandhiji had not gone to Cutch to sound the deep depths of Cutchi's mud and clean it. He wanted simply to understand the spirit of that Cutch, which had produced famous men like Gokuldas Tejpal and Khetsi Kheysi, Lakamshi Napu and Damji Karamshi, Khatou Makanji and Gokuldas Madhavji, Karimbhai Ibrahim and Fazalbai Karimbhai. It was true, however, he had heard the gutter stories of Cutch—stories that would make one's flesh creep! It was true also that during the last three months there might not be a single day when Gandhiji did not receive at least one letter of complaint about Cutch and that papers like the "Bombay Chronicle" had highlighted the Maharaja's inveterate love of shikar and, owing to it, both his visits to Africa and ban on his own subjects from shooting marauding leopards. All the same dabbling in these matters was not Gandhiji's main object for the visit.

But would the people let him keep clear of them? During the whole tour right from our alighting at Mandvi to our arrival at Bhuj (the capital)—and even in Bhuj itself—the people had only one subject in their talks with Gandhiji—the

anarchy and the iniquity that prevailed in Cutch. Somebody would point out right at the Port Custom House and exclaim "Heaven save us from the woes of the passenger over there ! He has to wait for clearance so long that the morning incomer has to wait till midnight or even the next morning !" Then someone would grumble, "But do you know of the queer way the customs duty is collected here ? I am sure you cannot have seen its like anywhere in the world. It is something like a mad-man's rule. Not to speak of both customs and excise duty, the method of assessment is unique. Officers fix the value of the goods. The exchange rate is 13 cowries ( Cutch's current coin), i. e., the Durbar gives us one Indian rupee for 13 cowries, but for payment of export and import duties the rate is 3.3/4 cowries ! These duties thus are automatically more than doubled ( sic. ) already. Then octroi duties are piled up, one upon another. We have to pay it at Bhuj, then at Anjar and then again at Mundra. As if that is not enough, there are not only different duties for different kinds of articles—which is but natural—but even the exchange rate differs with the kind of goods ! For timber it is 7 cowries to a rupee and for other qualities of wood it is 5 or 6 ! Even this heaping of duties one can understand—if it is a protective duty imposed on imported articles when they are also produced in the State. Nothing of the kind here. None would ever resent the imposition of heavy duties on foreign cloth, if Khadi sufficient for the State was produced locally. But you won't see even a stray piece of Khadi anywhere except at Vagad. Nobody will object to import duties on luxury goods, but is there any sense in an import duty on a cereal that does not grow at all in Cutch ? It is impossible for Cutch to produce rice and so we eat only the imported varieties. But even rice is taxed. Let alone rice, even knowledge is taxed. The school text-books alone are exempted from customs duty. You can get "Khakhkhar's Geography" without paying any tax, but the Bhagavad Gita is taxed at the rate of 7½ % !"

The vagary in the exchange rate has been referred to already. Of course, some people stand to gain by that queer rate, but



they are only a handful. The labour class gets its wages only in cowries and as it fixes the exchange-rate for them it does not stand to lose, but the employers have to pay through the nose. The cost of building an ordinary bungalow was 10,000 rupees; it has now gone up to 25,000. This exchange-rate bulges the pockets of officials, since the State pays them in rupees at the rate of 3.3/4 cowries per rupee, but for the subjects the rate is only 1.6 cowries ! Government servants earning a salary, say, of Rs. 200 thus actually get 450. So only the rare few outsiders who earn in cowries and get them exchanged in rupees, gain by this exchange rate.<sup>1</sup>

This is merely a summary of what I gathered from talks with many people. Then someone would grumble : But do you know, there is no Diwan (Chief Minister) in our State for the last 2 or 3 years ? Officials behave as they like without any let or hindrance. They accept bribes openly and injustice is rampant everywhere in all government departments. And then another would growl : "And look at the plight of agriculture here. But it is a very long story—this vicious system of 'bhaghatai'." Then some farmer would join the chorus : "One may not mind the total ban on import of motor cars—though the Rao himself uses it—for that would save money from flying away to foreign lands; but what will you say to the order that makes us helpless witnesses to the killing of our cattle by leopards, even though we have arms with us ? There was the case of a Patidar boy devoured by a leopard. Bawa (Maharao) did indeed rush to the scene of the tragedy. The aggrieved Patidar was furious : "How would you feel, if a leopard killed your Highness's son ?" he demanded. Bawa gave him 500 cowries, but did not withdraw the ban against killing wild beasts !" No untouchables came up to us to tell us of their troubles, but one or two sympathetic public workers said : "Untouchables enjoy a novel kind of monopoly here and it is a

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1. There seems to be incongruity in Sri Mahadevbhai's examples of iniquity quoted above but the fact stands that variety in the rates of exchange for different classes of goods is definitely a great injustice—Translator.

hair-raising tale. As if untouchables are the only ones on earth subjected to sexual misconduct, they enjoy a monopoly in this matter. Any official with a grudge against somebody fakes up a case. An untouchable woman appears in court (at the official's instigation) and states that she was misused by that particular individual. The man is arrested. The official himself notes down the evidence and then the accused is either fined or the case is 'compounded,' if the judge-cum-official's hands are sufficiently greased. You can imagine the large number of men who can thus be prosecuted or blackmailed under the threat of prosecution."

And there are other stories which are simply unprintable. Hardly would a complainant begin one such, when Gandhiji would say, "Now, please ! I have had enough of these disgusting tales. You may drop them and give some other complaints."

With our ears thus filled with such woeful accounts and eyes falling upon the few palatial buildings built for only temporary stays—which rose here and there among a host of mean village-huts, we lumbered along a bleak dusty road and came to Bhuj. On that same day we went to a public meeting where Gandhiji received a welcome address. The function was held in the Nagars' vadi (a large building surrounding an open courtyard). It was, indeed, a graceful act on their part. They knew Gandhiji's predilections and the generosity to give their 'vadi' for a promiscuous public meeting and even allow untouchables to come in. (Nagars belong to the highest sub-caste of Brahmins in Gujarat). Sri Mansing Kachrabhai first welcomed Gandhiji and then presented him with a big Punjabi-type spinning-wheel all made of solid silver with engravings that showed the exquisite, but now dying artistry of Cutch. The Sheriff then got up to read the address—I forgot to inquire of his caste. Long and couched though it was in a high-flown style, he read it through with proper intonations and emphasis on right places, neither dropping the praises of Gandhiji's views on untouchability, nor even faltering when he read them. The



address declared that the signatories and the people agreed with those views and requested Gandhiji to show them how to perform their duty properly in that matter. ( I shall deal with other matters in the address later on ).

That was how the address was read and handed over to Gandhiji, but, after all this show of sympathy for untouchables in the address, it was difficult to locate them in that same assemblage. Gandhiji looked all around and discovered that they were occupying an outlying corner of the courtyard behind him and were fenced off with a rope ! That was how the storm burst. We had its portents even when we were still on board the steamer. But this was not his first sad experience. He had already two previous editions of it—at Mangrol and Bhadrinath. Gandhiji had heard of the disgraceful backsliding of the friends of untouchables at Mangrol after he left the town. He was thus forewarned this time and compelled to give a very solemn warning to the people here. The pity of it was that the people were concerned solely about the mud that besmirched the state. They had no consciousness of the mud they were themselves grovelling in.

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When he addressed the President and others in his reply, he deliberately added the words : "And those untouchable brothers and sisters standing in that far-off corner." He then said :

"I thank you for your welcome address, for your reception at the station, for this silver spinning-wheel, and for your appreciation of my work. The address invites me to say something on two points : One, you have warmly supported my work for untouchables and in clear language expressed your desire to know from me personally what is the right approach and behaviour of Hindu society towards untouchables. The other thing you want from me is a 'sermon' to the Rao of Cutch and to you, his subjects, on your relationship and respective duties. It would be presumptuous on my part to give a 'sermon'.

I am not fit for it. But, as a friend of both the parties, I will certainly give my advice.

“Let me say something about your first request. Your address states you are doing your duty towards the untouchables. I had, therefore, hoped that you would not segregate them in at least this meeting, where you have invited me to speak. But I find you have drawn the line at the untouchables. I feel that my right place now is there—among the untouchables—as I have claimed to be a Bhangi time and again. Neither my vanity nor the sweeping winds of the West nor my ignorance is the cause of that claim. It springs simply and solely from my spirit of service—ingrained from my birth. I have made that claim only after my clear recognition of what true Hinduism means, after my complete adoption of the strictly Hindu behaviour of my parents, and not after being carried off my feet by new-fangled theories imported from the West. I have made consistent efforts for differentiating the body from its owner. I have studied the scriptures as much as a layman can and tried to adopt their commandments in my day-to day living. Hence, at the end of that study and practice of Hinduism, I have come to the firm conclusion that, if Hinduism clings to untouchability, Hinduism is doomed, Hindus are doomed, and the whole country is doomed.

“I grow ever deeper in that conviction as, in my wanderings all over India, I meet and discuss the question with many pandits learned in the Shastras. Without beating about the bush I, therefore, ask you to shun me, if owing to these convictions I am an untouchable in your eyes and deserve to be cut off. You may then frankly ask me to wind up my tour in a single day. If you do so, I shall be happy, not unhappy, at the realization that there is courage and self-awareness in Cutch and that Cutchis are not the men to be overawed and silenced from expressing their differences in views from the so-called great man. If, therefore, you ask me to go away, it will be good for all of us—for you, myself, and untouchables. If you feel an intention tremor in coming into my personal contact, the one thing



you should do is to leave me. I shall regard your action as a gesture of your love, your respect for me. That is exactly what I have said to my wife and sons. My wife is my life-mate in my soul's pilgrimage, but I am not fit to be her teacher. However ignorant she may be, I have a duty to perform towards her. I regard my wife and my sons as equals now and I have distinctly impressed upon them that they should leave me, if their views differ from mine. I say the same thing to you. Rest assured, your aloofness from me is going to make no difference in our friendly relationship. It does not mean any disrespect to me, but it would hurt me, if you call me and still segregate untouchables in that meeting. I have identified myself, completely with Hinduism. I live for Hinduism and wish to die for it. If I felt that my death right now would help Hinduism, I would embrace death with as much warmth and enthusiasm as I embrace you today. I, who serve Hinduism so much, regard untouchability as the darkest stain on it, and untouchables as dearer than life itself. Hence, just as a lover of Ramayana will not linger for a minute at the place, where Ramayana is slighted and run away, so I too cannot stay for a minute at the place where untouchables are looked down upon. If I did, it would only wound my heart. And as you have eulogised my method of Satyagraha, I shall seize this chance to give you an object lesson in it. I ask you, therefore, either to allow the untouchables to sit with me or allow me to go to them and sit in their midst. But if you do anything under the assumption that a man of my position should be humoured and that you can easily take a bath on return home, then let me warn you, that is not the right thing to do. That is not my way of keeping my religion. The right way for the man who thinks himself polluted at the touch of any human being is to abstain altogether from attending this meeting. This touch-me-not-ism is an excrescence on Hinduism. You might have some justification in your non-cooperation with these people, in the past, but nobody is, or can be, now consistent in his practice of exclusion. I have seen devout Jains touching untouchables and non-chalantly taking

their meals without purificatory baths. If that is the case with untouchables, it is absurd to imagine that Hindus who touch untouchables can be boycotted.

“On my part, even before I came here, I had given you a clear intimation of my views on the untouchable question. If, therefore, you now allow the untouchables to sit among you, you are to do so under the conviction that you are doing something that is virtuous not sinful, that you are purifying Hinduism, not dabasing it. But if you still feel you are committing thereby only a sin, then, without caring for any other consideration, you will please let me go there and sit with them. Whatever be your choice, if it is made with deliberate decision and without fear or regard for personalities, I shall take it as more valuable than your welcome address, more valuable than even this silver spinning-wheel and this silver casket. But I warn you, if after letting them sit with you, you treat untouchables with contempt again—as was done at Mangrol—you will render them not service, but dis-service. And this also I may add. If you make this reform, do it as a permanent measure and take the step today after full deliberation and a proper estimate of your strength. Just as one should eat only that food which his stomach can digest, so we should not hurriedly take an action which we intellectually agree with, but which our heart does not support. But once you begin a thing, you must carry it to the end.”

Votes for and against the reform were taken after this plain-speaking. The result was excellent inasmuch as people raised their hands fearlessly and thoughtfully. Hands raised in favour of the reform were somewhat fewer than those against. Even the Educational Inspector voted against. Gandhiji declared the result without feeling perturbed and expressed his readiness to honour the verdict. Extracts from the solemn speech that he then made deserve reproduction :

“We have now to take the next step. We shall now have to make a change in the present position in as orderly a manner



as a movement of troops. A majority of the meeting wants untouchables not to cross the barrier. You will, therefore, quietly allow the volunteers to put this table facing me in the block reserved for untouchables. You will now hear me speaking from there. If you do so quietly, it will please me. If under your love or pressing request I continue to sit and address you from here, it will pain me deeply. Not physical force, but only Satyagraha, only pressure of love, can root out untouchability. Religious reforms can succeed only by self-suffering, by *tapasya*, never by any other method—say of anger, contempt, or resentment. It is the Satyagrahi's *dharma* not even to think evil of the opponent of truth. This majority against me does not pain me, does not at least anger me. So now let all others keep to their seats. I alone will go there to sit among the untouchables, since that becomes my bounden duty in these circumstances. Just as it is my duty to be particular about having an untouchable girl in my Ashram and bringing her up, so it is now a must for me to go and speak from there. All you have to do is to keep sitting and hear me speaking from that corner."

And so the table was moved to the untouchable section of the meeting. Owing to people's eagerness to hear Gandhiji there was some disturbance, but quiet was restored very soon. Addressing the untouchables Gandhiji said :

"The second part of my speech is addressed to you. You should understand the meaning of what has happened just now. Do not be enraged against the orthodox section. If you wish that this reform should be brought about by love and not force,—so that it can be lasting—,you should cultivate patience. I have only one thing to beg of you. Take Ramnam daily; bathe daily, and wash your clothes daily ; give up wine and women. If you do that much, a day is certain to come when the world will respect you."

The welcome-address did not refer to untouchability only. Other things were darkly hinted at but not clearly expressed. As already stated, people had dinned into Gandhiji's ears

stories of 'the mud of Cutch,' but the address referred to only 'our many disabilities' and appealed to Gandhiji to impress upon both the king and the people what their respective duties were. Not only was the king absent from the meeting but also the Dewan ( or the Diwan-in-charge), though in Saurashtra, at all Gandhiji's meetings, if the king was not present, his Dewan was. The Heir-apparent, it was rumoured, would be present to hand over the casket to Gandhiji, but even he did not grace the meeting. Owing to their timidity the people put an ominous meaning on all this absence. As the Maharao Saheb had not met Gandhiji till then, any talk with him on people's grievances was out of the question, but the people had not the pluck even of publicly airing them. Gandhiji could not, therefore, refer to the people's hardships and the only thing he could speak about was the people's *dharma* to express their views boldly.

"If the scriptures and our past history had shown that a State could be ruled by none others than Rama and kings of his calibre, I would have been at daggers drawn with all the present rulers. But the same history that speaks of Rama refers to Ravana also and it also declares from house-tops that no Ravana of any nation has remained invincible. It is only a Rama who has won in the end. That shows that a monarch can rule over his State only so long as he does so according to *dharma*. I am an adorer of that kingly rule, where not a single person has to starve for food, not a single virgin is afraid of stirring out since nobody dares to cast an evil eye upon her, where the king regards everyone of his subjects as his own kith and kin and every woman as his sister or mother, where he abjures wine and other intoxicants and puts the interests of his subjects above his own. I am longing for the coming of that princely rule. And it is in order that kings may become such rulers, that I want the king and his subjects to be united by the bond of love. When kings become such wise rulers, there will be no famine, no starvation, no prostitution and no drink-evil.



“At present, however our Native States are reeking with all these evils. What does it mean ? It only means that kings have lapsed from their *dharma*, have given up their duty of protecting the lives, the properties and the *dharma*s of their people. It means they have not been able to preserve their character. And the scriptures have told us with the beat of drums that when the Three Vices—wine, women, and gambling—possessed the clan, though it was the one that produced Lord Krishna, it was destroyed before his very eyes. Krishna himself had to be a witness to the fratricidal war and annihilation of his own clan. That is what impels me to say, “The rulers of Cutch should mend their ways so completely that there would be nothing left for their people to complain of. So long as the king is virtuous and good, the subjects may help him both in his administration and justice and pay their dues to the State. But suppose he became a tyrant ? In that case, say the scriptures, it becomes the people’s *dharma* to ‘speak to the throne in the language of truth.’ But this they should do not in an insolent, but in a respectful manner,—very like the son’s complaints against his father. The subjects have, therefore, to imbibe all the three virtues—firmness, fearlessness, and courtesy. They should not forget that the maxim “As the subjects so the king”, is as true as the old one, “As the king, so the subject.” The same idea is happily expressed in the English saying, “A people get the government they deserve.” That means a prince is made by the people and the people by the prince. Truthfulness, heroism, and firmness of the people cannot fail to produce a salutary effect upon the king and the king’s tyranny and untruth are sure to corrupt the people.

“What then is the duty of the brave people of Cutch who have been scouring seas and lands and returning loaded with riches since ages past ? If the complaints referred to only vaguely in the address are true, you should not hesitate to lay them before the king in a courteous and loving tone. How is it possible for me to criticise them without meeting the Maharao and knowing what he has to say ? But I can say this much even

now. If all those grievances are genuine, the remedy lies with you and that is, not insolence and abuse but truth and love. Where the three holy forces of truth, valour, and love combine, no achievement is impossible. From my 30 years' vigilant effort and experience in political life I say, "Tell everything to the Maharao with firmness, truth and politeness. Accept my advice and translate it into action and then you will discover that I have given you a panacea for all your ills.

"If a meeting is to be held tomorrow, let it be announced to the people that untouchables will be allowed to sit anywhere without any hindrance, but that those caste Hindus who do not like this mixing-up will be provided with a separate block, just as compartments in railway trains are reserved for Europeans and Anglo-Indians. If this arrangement is unsuitable, I am prepared to attend a meeting composed exclusively of caste-Hindus, but not the one where untouchables are allowed to attend but only in a segregated part. You will, therefore, consult my disposition in arranging my programme.

"In my speech tomorrow I shall speak chiefly on famine, the spinning wheel, cow-protection and the duty of Hindus and Muslims. Finally, I will beg for your contributions and tell you how I shall spend them. He who does not want to give me anything may not attend. Only he may come, who approves of my love for untouchables. In order to gain my end, I want to follow only that method which our scriptures approve of. I want my *moksha* ( deliverance ) in this very life.<sup>1</sup> But I know I cannot gain that stage, till I grow completely free from all likes and dislikes. I want to put to use both the praises and the insults I receive for gaining this my cherished object. If the Inner-voice asks me to change my attitude, that alters the situation of course, but, otherwise, my conviction regarding removal of untouchability stands. It was I myself who gave an ultimatum to the Viceroy (in 1921 re. launching of mass civil disobedience ) and it was I again who withdrew it almost before it

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1. Hindu scriptures promise redemption even before death, provided certain qualities are imbibed and the mind conquered.



reached its destination. I am thus a man who listens to the still small voice within. "I am sincere and not merely polite or gentlemanly when I say, the meeting's conduct today is one of wisdom and politeness and an expression of nothing but love for me. I do not wish to hide anybody's fault—not even my wife's or son's or colleagues. If you want my help, you may have it on this clear understanding only. It is impossible for me to repay the debt I owe to India. I am deeply obliged to you also for implementing my advice. You have surpassed the people of Mangrol and Bhadran."

How far the people deserved those thanks and praises was partly tested almost immediately thereafter and is partly going to be tested in the near future. At the next meeting held yesterday ( on 23.10.25 ) Gandhiji's wishes were respected. There were separate but closely adjoining blocks of believers and non-believers in untouchability and both the blocks were full. There was a good number of even Brahmins and Banias ( Vaishyas ) in the block of non-believers. That showed courage indeed, and the people did display courage in publicly raising their hands for and against untouchability, but a tougher test of their courage awaits them now. It lies in the question whether both the groups of believers and non-believers take a concerted action and frankly present all the grievances of the people before the Maharao. If both of them—and both the groups suffer from the very same grievances—gather that courage, they can even successfully appeal to the Maharao, in loving respectful terms, to drop his intended foreign tour, so long as there is unrest in the State or at least so long as he does not take steps in the direction of allaying it. This is not at all impossible for a small number of subjects like those of Cutch.

Addressing today's meeting Gandhiji said :

"Let me first congratulate the Reception Committee for completely honouring the grouping of the meeting as decided upon yesterday. The blocks in the meeting are so skilfully partitioned that no third person but only you and I can know that the meeting is divided into 2 blocks. That is a sign of the

love that subsists between both the groups. I wish this happens everywhere. Reformers and untouchables must be provided with a single separate accommodation. This is done here and that is an indication of love. It shows perfect tolerance also. It will show the untouchable brothers what progress has been made in the reform of Hinduism. I see that the number in both the groups is fairly large, but the believers in untouchability exceed. I don't feel unhappy at all. On the contrary, I thank the majority group and congratulate them. I wish no hard feelings are created on either side and a recognition of the need for removing untouchability dawns on the majority group. My advice to the untouchables is the same as I gave yesterday, namely, they should keep clean. I cannot tire of repeating it.

“You may be eager to know what happened at my interview with the Maharao. I visited him and he gave me a quiet hearing. I narrated every one of your complaints—except one of minor importance. I cannot say what the outcome will be, but I can assuredly say this. If you accept in practice the advice I gave you yesterday, it is easy to get your grievances redressed. And why do the princes feel an obligation to hear me quietly? Because they know that I tell them only what I am convinced of at heart, because there is politeness in my tone, sweetness even in my frank and scathing comments and no bitterness, reservation, hate, or malice in my heart. Truth possesses that power intrinsically. It needs no exaggeration, not even an embellishment. There is the saying सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् । (One should speak truth as well as that which is pleasant to hear). That means, truth should be full of love and have no trace of hatred or violence. But today though we intellectually understand truth, we are poles apart from it in practice. I ask you to tell the king everything frankly and fearlessly. It is not only your right, but your duty to do so.

“But bear in mind one factor. There is one section of the people themselves that stands midway between the princes and their people. I mean the few officers who enjoy power over the



people at large. Let me add I myself belong to that class of officials and I am not vain enough to boast that I shall never be a State servant. But I say to these officials, "Be vigilant. The most watchful rule in India today is that of the British. It has introduced such a system of administration, that the official class cannot do injustice to the people, and yet even in that Government there are mean and villainous officials who subject the people to great hardships. One can then imagine the plight of the subjects of Indian States where there is no such system. That is why I ask you, officials, to consider sympathetically the complaints I have heard about you. The remedy lies with you yourselves and that is, not to abuse but to use your powers. Look upon bribery as a deadly evil. Fly from it as from dirt, from sin. I know the virtues and vices of peons. They have themselves told me tales of their mean practices. I ask them, will not your tyranny over poor helpless people recoil upon and make you unhappy? I say all this to the judges and the Dewan as well.

"There is no lack of the spirit of enterprize among the people of Cutch. All the same, stories that disprove it are repeatedly recounted to me. I don't want to disclose them here. I will only say, "Don't be stuffless creatures. You have given me accounts of the tyranny of customs duties. But you should know that it is a common practice everywhere. I do not wish to blame the Maharao for it, though the king is definitely responsible for the faults of his officers. It is because the merchant class is weak and supine that it wants to avoid the necessary exertion and takes the easy way of bribing the officers. There is only one reason why bribery goes on. The businessman who has to pay the customs duty wants to shirk full payment of the due amount. That induces the officers also to take bribes. You should understand that if you stop offering bribes, officers will cease to be eager to take them. If you shed your weakness and be strong, nobody will take a bad advantage of your weakness. The *dharma* of self-restraint in greed is enjoined on both the parties. Both the Gita and the Quran are explicit on this point.

"The so-called servants of the cow have bungled and mis-managed the question of cow-protection. The number of cows slaughtered for business is a hundred times as large as those the Muslims kill for *Qurbani* (sacrificial offering). Cattle are slaughtered in India not only for Muslims but for supplying the needs of the army and for the demand of leather. The butcher, besides, is indirectly supported in his profession from the ignorance of true Hinduism among the millionaires of India and from the lack or slackness of religious awareness in the preachers of Vaishnavism. It is the Hindus who own cows and so those who sell cows to butchers are none else but Hindus. All those who wear shoes at present use the hides of slaughtered animals, as it is not easy to tan the hides of dead cattle. If you want to save the slaughter of cows etc., the millionaires must enter the milk and leather markets.

"You can, of course, pass laws for cow-protection, but how can you transgress the law of nature? Hindus of India are certainly not prepared to die for the sake of the cow. The right solution of the question is for us to buy the best breeds of cows for our dairies, raise them, and sell their milk.

"If you insist on it, you can accept some of my activities and reject others and thus divide my life into water-tight compartments. Refuse supports to my untouchability programme and even Satyagraha if you must, but don't, I say, fling aside cow-protection and Khadi, both of which are good as gold. Why should the clothes needed in Cutch be imported from England? Why even from Indian-mills?

"You want me to collect money that should be spent in Cutch alone. Why should I care to come to you to help you in the matter? You can collect that amount yourselves. I collect money for helping the poor of the whole of India. When Bombay gave me 38 lakhs of rupees in 1921, did a single Cutchi ever demand that his contribution was to be spent in Cutch? If my friends, Cutchi, want to give me such ear-marked donation, I would refuse to take a single *cowri* from them. It is for the helpless cows



of India, for the protection of the chastity of the poor women of India, for saving the lives of the starving millions of India, that I ask for money. If, when that is the case, you insist on the narrow-minded principle of 'Kutchis' money for Kutch alone, India will go to perdition. You are definitely entitled to know if I have the power and discretion to rightly spend the money you give. And if you have no faith in the causes I espouse, you may certainly give me not a single rupee. But remember that Cutch is only a speck on the map of India and that small dot has got to make sacrifices for the cause of the colossal expanse that India is. As for your local needs, you can easily collect funds under the patronage of your own leaders. But it behoves neither you nor me, if you invite me to collect money under my auspices and want me to use the amount for yourselves only. Marwaris give me money, but, do you think, they do so on the condition of using it in Marwar? They gave me a lakh of rupees for Hindi-propaganda in Madras. They are giving me princely donations for cow-protection. For Behar also they have given me heaps of money. But yesterday I carried away from Marwaries of Behar enormous amounts. But none of them asked me to spend his contribution after Marwar only. It was for the first time and from the lips of the local Kutchis alone, that I heard—and with deep distress—such a strange demand. It is your *dharma* to give money for the whole of India, since the money you earn comes for India, from your business with India, and you are bound to repay that debt."

As a result of this speech Sri Mansingbhai Kacharabhai gave Rs. 10,000 for the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund and Rs. 2500 for cow-protection. Two or three hundred, it was announced, were collected on the spot for the Memorial and small amounts for cow-protection. Another sum of Rupees 200 also was collected. It is a pleasure to note here that a Khoja (a Muslim community) gentleman gave Rs. 500 for cow-protection.

It is interesting to introduce here a friend, Chaman by

name. He is frank and open-hearted to the core. He says what he feels—no matter to whom. Without feeling overawed he talked freely with even Gandhiji and was candid enough to admit his own shortcomings. He came to Gandhiji on the day following the public meeting and stated plainly that his faith in non-violence was vaning. He even imagined that Khadi was uncongenial to his health and gave that as his reason for giving up Khadi which he had begun to wear. He donated Rs. 500 for cow-protection and left with Gandhiji his own verse translation in Urdu of Gandhiji's favourite hymn 'Vaishnavajana to.' He has substituted the word 'Muslim' for 'Vaishnava' in his Urdu translation. It deserves reproduction here :

(The following is a reprint of the English translation of the Gujarati poem whose rendering in Urdu appears in Gujarati script in the Gujarati Diary—Translator).

He is a Muslim and none else,  
 Who in virtue ever excels.  
 He feels as his another's grief  
 And wipes the tear and brings relief.  
 And yet with pride he does not swell;  
 Humility true in him doth dwell.  
 In praises free, to slander untrained,  
 In mind and speech and act restrained.  
 Not his the eye that lusts; desire-free,  
 With equal eye the world doth see.  
 Others' wealth he does not crave;  
 Speaks truth in temptations grave.  
 No craze, no spell, disturb his peace;  
 Renunciation firm is his.  
 In tune with God, himself the sage  
 Becomes a place of pilgrimage.  
 Is crooked wiles and greed without;  
 Anger and lust are all thrown out.  
 Hail, mother ! thou, who gave him birth  
 And brought up the son of glorious worth.



The holy sight of such a sage,  
Says Narshinh, saves our whole lineage.

25. 10. 1925

Left Bhuj for Kotda on 25. 10. 1925. On the way we came to Manzal. A large number of the villages of Cutch are known for their emigrants who have earned fame abroad as merchants, princes and philanthropists. The late Sri Khatao Velji of this Manzal was a devoted servant of both Khadi and peasantry. At the Ahmedabad Congress session he secured the first prize for an excellent dhoti made from yarn spun by himself. His sister Smt. Sadhwibehn and other women encircled Gandhiji's car. All of them were wearing Khadi and had brought presents of yarn and artistic products of Cutch, such as, nut-crackers, pen knives etc. Smt. Sadhwibehn had brought some Khadi also of self-spun yarn. When Gandhiji saw these sisters, he exclaimed: "So Kutch is not wholly an arid desert after all. There are green patches too." The remark, strangely enough, synchronised with our car coming to a green part.

We reached Kotda at last. Just as Manzal takes one back to Sri Khatao, Kotda may be said to be the village of Sri Jivaraj Kalyanji, a lover of Khadi and of untouchables and a man who has made his name by his gift of a hundred thousand rupees. You cannot imagine what it means to be 'a lover of untouchables' in a place like Kotda, unless you go there yourself. We found that even Bhuj's rigidity in untouchability was nothing before Kotda's!

A big tobacco merchant, Sri Mulji Sikka, had subscribed a large amount and collected 7-8 thousand rupees for an 'untouchables' school'. It was decided that Gandhiji himself should lay the foundation of the building. From all this one may, naturally, anticipate the presence of a large number of 'untouchables' and their children at the function and cherish the hope that the school will be a stepping-stone to the removal of untouchability. Nothing of the kind at Kotda. On the contrary, the

donors had given their contributions under the clear understanding that no 'caste-Hindu'—not even the teachers' staff—was to touch the untouchable children and all school business was to be carried out under that express condition. This extraordinary condition took our breath away. The story of the Bhuj event, moreover, had spread to Kotda and created a sensation. Over and over, again the words 'Galchan, galchan' (A word with you) struck our ears and people were whispering: "Gandhiji has come. Wonder what is going to happen today." At Mandvi, a few women welcomed Gandhiji with the appellation 'beloved Sadhu' in their garbas (round community dance-songs). At Bhuj, the sight of Gandhiji made women wonder: "Is he a house-holder or a sannyasi?" And some of them would reply with evident satisfaction, "No, no. He wears a loin cloth indeed but has not renounced the world." But at Kotda, I should not wonder if the question discussed was, "Is he a Vaishnava or a Dhed (an untouchable)?" After many pour-parlers and parleys, it was decided to hold the public meeting on the line of Bhuj. At the sight of guests like us sitting among untouchables, many local caste-Hindus also were sitting in that block, but the President himself used to pick out Banias and Lohanas from among us and personally lead them away! But all this well-laid scheme of men and mice for preserving untouchability ran astray! The number of untouchables grew and grew till both the sections came so close to each other that, ultimately, in the absence of artificial lights, the pale moonlit night made the separation impossible!

Gandhiji's speech: "I thank you for giving me Rs. 2,500 for the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. But the contribution is not enough for the memorial of a man like him. It is quite in the fitness of things that you raise a memorial here. But the fund I am collecting is an all-India fund, to be used for the propagation of both the spinning wheel and Khadi. You have shown good feelings for me and that means you love me, have a corner in your heart for me. What I, therefore, want from you is a change of heart."



This was the occasion, the first ever for us, to learn the new meaning of the expression 'school for untouchables'. I refuse pointblank to believe that they were giving that meaning in good faith. The truth behind the move was that the rich people wanted to kill two birds with one stone. They wished to earn the honour of opening a school for untouchables and at the same time to remain steadfast in orthodox Hindu society at large, or worse still, to make sure that Hindu society did not deviate from its rut. I have reason to say so, because the gentleman who gave his donation for the school on the condition of rigid adherence to untouchability is the one man who counts in Kotda. He was the whole and sole of the school fund and it was at his insistence that others who wanted to sit with untouchables at the meeting could not do so.

The foundation stone also was laid by Gandhiji in the evening only after a Brahmin, Sri. Kharashankar, sanctified the ceremony by reciting Sanskrit mantras. There was one saving grace, however. A handful of untouchable children had strayed into the meeting in order to eat 'goldhana' ( molasses and coriander seeds distributed on an auspicious occasion ). I do not attach much importance to this foundation ceremony, though, I must add, Gandhiji agreed to lay it only after two gentlemen had promised to conduct the school in a manner that removed the bar sinister. Gandhiji said to those present :

"Remember that Hinduism is certain to be destroyed, if you don't uproot untouchability. I don't do the slightest thing without getting God's approval, without listening to the command of the 'still small voice.' I have studied this ( unto-uchability ) question and have been acting upon the truth I came to from my study. As such a Hindu, I warn you, alert you. On the one hand, you talk of feeling yourselves polluted and, on the other, claim to build this school out of pity for untouchables. Sympathy for untouchables and retention of untouchability cannot go together. As long as you cling to untouchability, your claim for sympathy cannot stand."

'Mulji Sikka & Co.' gave 2500 rupees for the Deshbandhu

Memorial and the gentleman's mother gave a special invitation to Gandhiji and gave him Rs. 5000 for the Memorial and Rs. 1000 for cow protection. Another gentleman gave Rs. 250 each for the funds.

The scenes we met with as we proceeded were more or less similar to that at Kotda. At our visiting places, hardly any public worker seemed to have given a previous intimation of Gandhiji's expectations in visiting them. All they wanted was to parade Gandhiji in a procession as a Mahatma and give the people the benefit of his *darshan*.

From Kotda we went to Kothara. We were told that the residents were eager to have Gandhiji in their midst and had made many days' previous preparation for his reception. That was why a whole-night's killing journey of 28 miles in bullock carts brought us to Kothara. But the preparation was nothing more than a noisy gathering. In all that crowd, Khadi was rarely visible and I doubt if anybody had cared to do anything for the Deshbandhu fund. The President was some goody-goody gentleman, attired in a superfine foreign made dhoti and other mill made clothes. He stated that if he had given up foreign clothes even to some extent, it would have meant something, but he expressed his regret for not doing so! Untouchables were not given any respectable place but Vallabhbhai and others went there and brought them in the unreserved block. But caste-Hindus who sat in that block were negligible in number. When an appeal was made for the Deshbandhu Memorial it was stated that nobody had given them a previous intimation!

And then proceeding—or rather going down south—towards Mandvi, we came to Godhro. There were quite a number of palatial buildings and we had hoped that a respectable amount would be given us for the Deshbandhu fund. But the same sad story even there. Rather, it was sadder still for we were told that some residents, at present living in Bombay, had sent the word round that Gandhiji was to be given a welcome, but nothing was to be given to him for carrying away Kutch's



money out the county. All the same our host, who thought it his duty to honour the guest, gave 500 rupees for the Desh-bandhu Fund.

Some people found the arrangement of a public meeting made at Bhuj a convenient answer to their problem and a tendency seemed to have grown to adopt it as the right and ideal way out of their difficulty. At the meeting at Godhro the system of dividing the meeting into two blocks was, therefore, adopted. However, at that meeting Gandhiji's only comment was :

"I have nothing much to say against the arrangement except to point out that it itself shows the sad situation into which we have fallen. So long as this state continues all talk of Swaraj and freedom has no meaning."

In conclusion he commented upon the short-sighted and miserly character of Cutchis and explained the essence of Vaishnavism and Jainism. We then proceeded further. The report of the Bhuj meeting had spread far and wide. Under the impression that there was some mishandling of the situation there, Mandvi people resolved to repair the error of a mix up and still give Gandhiji a reception satisfactory to him. But the ill-luck, call it Mandvi's, call it ours, that dogged our footsteps all along played its part there also.

Even before Gandhiji's arrival the question as to where he was to be put up turned out to be a knotty problem. Who would run the risk of hosting Gandhiji, the patron of an untouchable girl? It was found difficult to find out even the place for Gandhiji's public meeting. A rich monk then came forward to be Gandhij's host and let the public meeting as well be held in his courtyard. He accepted the challenge that the reception of Gandhiji offered, at the cost of refusing to heed the protests of the Brahmins who dined frequently at his sanctuary, 'Brahmapuri'. The Reception Committee framed the rules of the meeting so carefully that they thought untouchability could be maintained and Gandhiji could be

honoured with a welcome-address also; thus they tried to keep a delicate balance between adhering to an old custom and honouring a reformer. But these nice calculations made by those shrewd businessmen who could keep their accounts of millions accurate to a pie ( smallest coin ), were destined to be squashed into a pulp !

Two separate gates and two separate routes leading to them were provided—one for untouchables and the other for caste-Hindus. They wanted to avoid thereby the mistake made at Bhuj, where ultimately it had become a 'hodge-podge.' The untouchables were required to go through one special route, enter the meeting through a special gate, and sit within a clearly demarcated cordon. But the route they had to pass through deserves detailed description. It was a narrow lane, lying between the city wall and the wall of the Brahmapuri courtyard, and always used as a long open latrine for the townsmen. How could untouchables, it was thought, feel any repulsion in passing through it, when it was their very business to sweep off the excreta everyday from the lane ? But the people did not use that lane for easing themselves on that particular day. And it must be added that sand was spread over it profusely. Can sand alone, however, suppress the stench the lane emitted ?

That lane, it was fixed, was to be used exclusively by the untouchables. The Bhadrals ( high-brow Hindus ) were to enter by the main gate and go straight to the meeting, and if any of them was tempted to sit in the block of untouchables he would be compelled to go out only by passing through that dirty lane ( An intelligent device indeed to save untouchability ! ). As Gandhiji was by birth a 'bhadralok', it was arranged by the Reception Committee that he was not to use that 'reserved' lane for going to the meeting, but take the route fixed for bhadraloks. It would have been wiser, if before holding the meeting this route for him were plainly shown in the written rules submitted to Gandhiji for his approval. The framers now say that the rules *meant* that route for Gandhiji's passage, and our host, the monk, too, might have thought that



Gandhiji had agreed to go through that route. But Gandhiji interpreted the words, "a separate route and a separate gate for untouchables," in the written handbill for the meeting to mean that the route and the gate meant for untouchables were also to be used by these caste-Hindus who did not believe in untouchability. Common sense could not interpret those words in any other way – specially after the Bhuj incident which clearly revealed Gandhiji's predilections. But the Reception Committee which aimed at the impossible ideal of conforming to both Gandhiji and orthodoxy, did not understand those words to convey that sense.

The sequel made history. Gandhiji, naturally, took the route reserved for his beloved kith and kin—the untouchables. A member of the Reception Committee protested. Gandhiji tried to reason with him, but he would not agree. The report of this discussion reached the ears of our aged host, Riddhagarji, who grew furious and left the meeting abruptly, though Gandhiji had not till then even reached the section for untouchables !

This old monk of 80 might hardly have any occasion in his long past to find his wishes crossed. Looking to his standing, one need not be surprised if the Reception Committee had made the rules in conformity with his dictates. Is there any wonder then if that respected religious head should get enraged ? And then from anger arose infatuation and from it loss of self-awareness as to what he was doing.<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji went to the rostrum which stood at the parting of the the two blocks and, taking the Reception Committee's permission, began to explain the mishaps of the day.

"Today's incident is a good augury. Religion is such a serious matter that one should be prepared to offer one's very life for it. I have entered this meeting in perfect accordance with the rules. There is nothing wrong about their framing and in pursuance of them the Reception Committee should bring me through the route meant for untouchables. That was the

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1. Allusion to Gita II-63

procedure that became me and them as well, and the one in which their dharma lay. Moreover, I did not desire that a single member of the Committee should touch me. But at the time of my entry the rules were differently interpreted. In order that all those who wanted to sit on the dais could freely do so, I myself suggested that the dais might be raised at a distance from the blocks and seats kept separate. I have not touched anyone besides. There was, therefore, no need for the respected monk to leave the meeting. He could have continued to sit where he was and dropped the address into my hands without having to touch me. Let somebody carry this message from me to him even now."

But nobody had the courage to take that message to him. While this message of peace was still being proffered, there burst upon the meeting a novel 'message' from the sannyasi maharaj himself. A disturbing noise was heard at a corner of the meeting. It was discovered that the revered monk had sent his men to disperse the meeting, as his 'Brahmapuri' was now polluted ! He could have easily sent a note to Gandhiji stating that Gandhiji had acted wrongly and the meeting should be dispersed. Instead of doing any such thing, he took to the law of the rich and influential. That religious man forgot his position and civility in the inebriation of his riches.

Gandhiji continued : "I am doing an interpreter's work so as to bring about a correspondence between Hindus and untouchables. I cherish only this desire in my heart : As long as my life lasts, I would like to be a bridge that joins the two sections and then I wish my death to serve the same purpose. Don't imagine that I feel any resentment or anger against the respected monk. How can that man cherish hard feelings for Riddhagarji who is prepared to clean the bed-pan of even General Dyer, if the need arises ?" But hardly had these words escaped Gandhiji's lips and the audience heard them, when with the aid of their lathis Riddhagarji's men were seen driving out the untouchables from the meeting !

It was this Riddhagarji who, only two days back, had oppo-



sed the Brahmins and insisted on letting Gandhiji's meeting be held in the precincts of his Brahmपुरi, and it was this same Riddhagarji again who had sent his men to use their lathis on the totally unresisting untouchables who were not at all insisting on staying in the meeting !

A strange contradiction, but that was what did happen. Gandhiji dispersed the meeting after announcing that another meeting would be held the next morning in a public maidan outside. He was programmed to leave Mandvi the next afternoon but some gentlemen of Mandvi and its only public worker, Sri Gokuldas, were ashamed of the fiasco and did not want their town to be the object of the world's ridicule. They conferred together at night, woke up Gandhiji at the unearthly zero hour, and earnestly entreated him to postpone his departure till the evening, so that an address of welcome could be given him at a public meeting. Gandhiji agreed. So that meeting was held the next evening. The arrangement there also was such as would not fail to amuse anybody. On one side were untouchables, on the other the bhadraloks ( among whom were one Muslim and one Parsi gentleman ) and in the middle but distinctly apart from both was Gandhiji's dais. After the President's election, he sat in a chair placed apart from everybody—most untouchable of all !

The President of the Reception Committee was the first to criticize publicly in Cutch itself—the undemocratic character of the rule there. The address was then read out. One could see from it that the people had begun to learn the lessons of honesty : “We have not imbibed the noble lessons of self-sacrifice taught by your life. We understand the glory and greatness of your principles of truth and non-violence, but are unable to solve the difficult problem that untouchability poses. There has been little progress in Khadi owing to its high price and inferior quality. We give this our mite for your fund which is going to help the needy.” These were some of the sentiments expressed in the address. The untouchability question, it seemed, was

certainly their headache. The President's hands were trembling as he threw the address into Gandhiji's hands to avoid touching him. Everyone laughed at this strange method of honouring a man and even the President could not help laughing ! Gandhiji was an untouchable, of course, and still a man who deserved to be honoured ! Why not, then, honour untouchables also in the same extraordinary way for their services ?

But let us return to the subject. Gandhiji had had his full say in his speech there :

"I congratulate you all for the courage shown in the speech read before me on behalf of the Reception Committee. Please accept my heartiest greetings on the daring criticism you have made and I hope the Rao of Cutch will hear all you have to say to him in patience and love.

"I do not know whether there is a municipality in this town of Mandvi. If there is, I am certain it must be granted full rights. Mandvi's uncleanness makes my flesh creep ! Though a host of enterprising spirits among Vaishnavas, Jains, Muslims and others live in Mandvi, it stands, I think first among our dirtiest towns ( cheers ). You may, if you think fit, exult with pride at my statement, but I wanted you to sigh with me. You should make a resolve to end this state - with or without the Maharao's aid. You have here a salubrious climate, invigorating sea breezes, and digestive water and yet there are frequent outbursts of plague. It is anything but a becoming sight to see the town's lanes and squares decorated by its residents with night soil at that time in the morning, when Hindus are taking Ram-nam and Muslims crying their calls to prayers. That is a thing one should be ashamed of. I wonder if there is as much dirt anywhere else as in Mandvi. My own home-town was just like this 40 years ago but it is no longer so. If you but take some risk in money and engage an efficient health-officer, you can change Mandvi into a beautiful town right tomorrow. Excellent latrines in your lanes are a must for you. The man who leads a city life has got to keep his house clean. When we lived in jungles and villages, we used to 'go to a jungle' ( Gujarati phrase



for going out of a village to ease oneself ), but that you cannot do now. If now, instead of going to a jungle, we use our lanes as a jungle, we would be looked down upon as savages in civilized countries. I hope, therefore, that the townsmen of Mandvi will observe cleanliness and construct curtained latrines. We call the earth Mother and sing Her glories. It is a sin to soil Her this way. I have dealt with this thing at length, because I am really very sorry at this sight. I say to everybody, 'If you want to invite me, my latrine must be as clean as my library or dining room.' That is why I carry my commode with me. You should, therefore, take the advice of a good doctor and make some permanent arrangement to preserve cleanliness.

"You may read my speech at Bhuj to know what I have to say about the Maharao of Cutch.

"And now about that painful chapter—I mean, yesterday's incident. But, to me for one, it was an experience at once painful and pleasant. It was a very trying test for me, personally, as a Satyagrahi. I am a man who claims to observe the *dharma* of non-violence and Satyagraha, a man who is constantly making efforts in that direction. It is a sacrilege for me to get angry, to have ill feeling for anyone. And I must keep to my principles not merely when you applaud me. My claim is worth anything only when everything goes wrong and I rise above anger, irritation or condemnation. I faced such a test yesterday. I am not saying that the rules of the meeting were perfect, but a guest must keep them, whatever they be. He has no right to break a single rule. I, therefore, observed the rule, irksome though it was. But immediately on my entry, I was told that I had not kept the rule. I was told, I ought to go only by the passage which the high-class Hindus used—not by the one reserved for untouchables. I could not see sense in the objection. The man who insisted that I should observe the rule according to his interpretation insulted three parties : The first, me personally, the second, my blood-brothers, the untouchables; and the third the people themselves. The question arose whether I should accept the condition of going by

the route for non-untouchables. I refused and went along the one for untouchables.

"But instead of the people feeling sorry for thus insulting three parties, more distressing events happened. The monk, Riddhagarji took to his heels. That such an aged holy man, who had come with great enthusiasm to receive me and give me a welcome address, lost his balance of mind and ran away, was the first thing that grieved me. The next painful thing was the realization that nobody was prepared to carry my message to him. And the last, the most unkindest out of all, was the dispersal of the meeting by the monk's proteges. How were the untouchables to blame in the matter? Why were they insulted and forcibly driven out? Courtesy demanded that a note should be sent to me and get the meeting dispersed that way. But those men insisted that they wanted to kick out the untouchables.

"What then made me regard the occasion as one of joy also? I saw in the event the uplift of untouchables. I suppressed my anger. And the fact that the untouchables received abuses and blows without retaliation was to me a thing to exult at. The forbearance they showed is itself the remedy for untouchability. To other Hindus I will certainly say, Hinduism dies if untouchability lives, but to the untouchables I will speak only of tolerance and patience.

"After these remarks I wish to congratulate Mandvi on being able to keep today the rules of the meeting properly. I believe that each of the groups sitting in separate enclosures is doing so in a spirit of brotherliness for the other. It was not for annoying him, that I passed remarks against Riddhagarji. They were the expressions of a loving reformer. I sent a messenger to him to inquire if I should cease to be his guest. And he sent a courteous reply that I continued to be his guest. Hence, it is as his friend and well-wisher that I said what I did about him. He who is respected as a monk should not get angry, but remain calm. Hinduism can shine only with men of self-control and forbearance and a Hindu monk can shed



lustre to his religion only when he observes his *dharma* of peacefulness.

“Untouchables, on the other hand, must discharge their duty. You must keep the rules of cleanliness. I find from your letter that one good has come out of yesterday’s evil. 25 of my untouchable brothers have taken a vow not to eat putrid flesh. That is a very good thing indeed. But let me warn you. You must not recede from your resolution. Don’t forget that the mill workers of Ahmedabad once compelled me to go on a fast. It was because they were weakening and about to break their vow, that I had to fast. I want you to take your vow after the full realization of the risk its keeping involves. If you fall from your vow, remember that this your servant will leave this world on your account. That is why I say everyone must invoke God’s presence when he takes the vow and bear in mind that it is a blasphemy to break it. And never forget that you are playing a dangerous game with a man who has fasted four times.

“Khadi worth Rs. 500 will be given to those of you who are entitled to have a share in it. I am fully aware that you are a suppressed lot. I am told that the law itself compels you to get into the clutches of those whose debt you incur. If you become good and clean, how is it possible for Hindu society to refuse to take you under its wings ?

“Two statements about Khadi and the spinning wheel made in your address surprise me. I did not expect businessmen to hold such wrong views. Though born in a business community, I became a barrister-at-law, then took to the soldier’s profession and now I have reverted to business. From you I hope to be helped with money, shrewd intelligence, and well-organized Khadi work. Some persons have sacrificed their lives for Khadi and untouchability. I bow to them in reverence. You are talking of bringing down the price of Khadi. But why do you forget that it is in your hands to do so ? There are women and children in your homes. You can persuade them to spin. Khadi would be cheap in a trice, if you do so. I am sure you

know that the present rates of Khadi are half what they were 4 years ago.

“Please do give me as much money in charity as you can. You will get full return and with compound interest. I become a Cutchi with a Cutchi and a Marwari with a Marwari. That is my nature. You have called me a worthy son of India. It is on that ground that I ask you to fulfil my highest expectations about Mandvi.

“Today is full-moon day, the birth day of Rajchandrabhai.<sup>1</sup> He was a man of exceptional intelligence, a man who had God’s vision and a man not only always intent in the pursuit of self-realization, but also one who was within sight of the goal. His beautiful poem<sup>2</sup> reveals the inner working of his mind. If, however, anybody imagines that he had attained *mukti* (freedom from birth and death) let him dismiss the idea from his mind. He was certainly striving for it. But a desert dry as Sahara had intervened.<sup>3</sup> But he did arrive at a stage approximate to *mukti*.

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1. Sri Raichandbhai’s preoccupation was self-realization even when he was doing thriving business as a jeweller. He kept a diary with him in which he would jot down, immediately after a customer left him, the religious thoughts that had struck him. During Gandhiji’s days of doubts about Hinduism, he put 26 questions to Sri Rajchandbhai and his answers were perhaps the chief means that kept Gandhiji rooted in Hinduism. He was a poet, philosopher, and saint rolled into one.

2 The poem begins with :

“When, o when, shall dawn the glorious day  
When we are free within, without,  
Of the shackles that chain us to this clay ?

3. The editor of the Gujarati Diary gives the following :

“He (Rajachandraji) had attained the stage when he could know his actions in his past life. He found himself thwarted in his spiritual progress when he came to that period in his present life when his actions in the past life began to bear fruit in this Gandhiji refers to his (Rajchandraji’s) statement with reference to this period. Rajchandraji himself has stated : ‘I wanted my pilgrimage completed at a very quick rate of speed. And then a desert, like Sahara, came in my way. I had a very heavy load (of past actions that acted as counter-influences) to carry. In trying to work out the resulting negative influences as

( Continued on next page )



That is why I said he had the vision of God. He was endowed with spiritual knowledge and wisdom. He had many other good qualities. My relationship with him was too close and psychic for expression. When I returned to Bombay from England in July 1891, I had my first contact with him. Right since then we were always able to understand each other. He was a Jain, but in reality neither a Jain nor a Vaishnava. He was one who had gone beyond all such limitations and had succeeded in completely identifying himself with every living creature. You will hardly find anywhere else the power and spirit of his pen. He was free from contradiction between speech and behaviour. You will agree with me, if you read his books.

"One of the remarkable traits of character in him was his wonderful tolerance. He had not an iota of the untouchability-attitude in him. I have spent nights and nights with him. I say all this in order that those who adore him can understand that he did not believe in untouchability.

"I remember a little incident in his life. There was a leather strip rimming the inside of his cap. We all know that there is no lapse from non-violence in wearing shoes, but he did not wear them. I drew his attention to that leather band. Immediately he stripped it off from the cap. I was only like a child before him and certainly did not want to give him a lesson in non-violence.

"I regard it a piece of my good fortune that, in this town of Mandvi, under the canopy of the boundless sky, at the time when the full moon is shedding its cooling beams on earth and at the place, where my feet are planted upon mother earth and

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quickly as possible, I strove so hard that I felt terribly exhausted." "Srimad Rajchandra", 1951 edition.

But it is doubtful whether the numerous followers and admirers will accept this modified admiration of Gandhiji, supported though it seems to be by the above quotation. They will at once say in reply that in that quotation Srimad Rajchandra refers to an intervening period of his life,—before he could renounce the world completely,—and that he did attain to the stage of complete self-realization before he died.

I enjoy the limitless freedom of no enclosures except those of the so-called ones of the four directions, I got this splendid chance to sing the glories of Rajachandrabhai, who had reached the very outskirts of the land of *mukti* and who, though he had the capacity to earn millions, renounced all the means of earning it and devoted himself exclusively to those pursuits which lead one to God.

“Who may like to go in for ventures and what is the impelling force behind him? Men take risks even for committing adultery, for winning a bride, or earning money. But all these exploits are suicidal—like the one of jumping into a well. One must dare hazards only for the object of crossing the river of life and reaching the Promised Land. Exertion and struggle should be made only for realising the Self. One should do only that kind of business which does not require him to harm anybody and wrench a penny from him. I have seen with my own eyes people sitting and chatting with me as respected men and rolling in wealth only yesterday and now being in a plight aptly described by our poet in the words, “I have seen the relatives of mighty monarchs begging in the streets.” Why then all this hectic activity for a thing that is all so fleeting? Why all this fuss, this rush and tremble, this put-up show, to possess a bauble? Dangers should be braved for only one object—to enable you to see the glory and greatness of God and sing them. That is heroism of the right sort which makes you mad after realizing all this creation as but a play of God. These infinite numbers of stars in the sky! Whose light do they transmit? Even if we have to go through countless reincarnations, that is the only thing worth our effort. Shrimad Rajchandra was suffering from unbearable physical pain during the last moments of his life, but he did not feel it. Even in the midst of that death-agony, he was possessed with a burning longing to see God. Today, when the situation compels me to give you some home-thrusts, I remember Shrimad Rajchandraji, extol his spirit of non-violence, and feel myself blessed. Through that sacred recollection, let



us gain the power to have no fear about speaking out the truth that appears crystal clear to our inner self. Let us cherish only one fear—that of Divine Consciousness, i. e. God. Our one concern in life should be: 'Never must I by thought, word, or deed, do the slightest thing that would offend Him Who is alert all the 24 hours of the day to protect and do me good. Let us from Rajchandra's life learn the art of endless tapasya and understand that it was from his *tapasya* ( strenuous efforts) that he learnt to concentrate his love on the Divine Consciousness. Let us understand that though we are as weak as a lamb by ourselves, the Divine does dwell in us and let us with that awareness become as strong as a lion on the strength of the Indweller. If we do so, then only is life worthwhile.

"And what shall I say to my friends, the volunteers? They have served me faithfully and well. I only wish, they render even greater service—not to a mahatma alone, but to all. They may serve those whom everybody throws into oblivion, never cast a lustful eye on anybody, never drink and become Satan's imps, never be afraid of anyone, always wear Khadi and be eager to serve others. They may be free from the disease of untouchability. Their hearts may be overflowing with love. They may receive blows of the people, but never return any. They may serve the country by dying for it."

Getting five thousand rupees for the Deshbandhu Memorial from that Mandvi from where Gandhiji had expected one hundred thousand, he turned to the north again. Both tragic and comic scenes which we began to meet with right from our departure from Bhuj continued during our journey onward. We left for Mundra at 7.30 p. m. We wanted to halt at Bhujpar lying on the way. We were told we would reach Bhujpar within 3 to 4 hours, ( i. e., at about 12 midnight ) but our guides turned out to be misguides as was usual in our tour in Cutch. It was late at 3.30 a.m. that we reached the town. Some enthusiastic youths had brought Gandhiji to Bhujpar in the hope that the public meeting to be held at 7 a. m. for a welcome address to him would be crowded thick with people

coming from all the numerous surrounding villages. So at the end of several hours jogging in a bullock cart, Gandhiji took only a short nap after our arrival at 3.30 a. m. and was up and doing—ready for the meeting at 7 a. m. He waited and waited but nobody cared to turn up and there was no public meeting at all ! The men who counted in the town were against holding a public meeting, against admitting untouchables to any meeting, and against giving an address to Gandhiji whom they called a blood-brother of untouchables. And if the elders would not give a civic reception, how could striplings claim the address given by them as by the town itself ? The youths were, therefore, in a fix and admitted their disappointment. Gandhiji then went to the untouchable quarter, a crowd of young men followed him, and a public meeting was held in that untouchable locality. The untouchables begged Gandhiji : “Our Khadi industry has gone to rack and ruin. Please revive it and get our Khadi sold. Only then can we weave Khadi now.” Some of them gave some coins also to Gandhiji. Some women had collected at the dharmashala ( a guest-house with a courtyard enclosed which provided free temporary lodging for wayfarers ) where Gandhiji had put up. They gave him some money and then Gandhiji left for Mundra. Some men of Bhujpar gave at Mundra about 650 rupees which they had collected from their town. Bhujpar showed at least its courage of conviction by its refusal to give an address to Gandhiji. But Mundra beat even Mandvi.

While the incidents in Mandvi provoked laughter, those in Mundra tore the heart. Mandvi tried to find out a novel way to escape from the mess ( the medley of caste-Hindus and untouchables ) created in Bhuj. But Mundra reduced to a miserable mockery of the improvised arrangement of Bhuj and wounded Gandhiji’s feelings. From the outlook it appeared as if the people of Mundra were ridiculing Gandhiji and his untouchability campaign by telling him, “So you want two sections. Well, we’ll give them and with a vengeance”. They made a big show, gave him a grand reception, carried him in a procession, took



him to the school for untouchable children conducted by a Khoja ( a Muslim sect ) gentleman and some of them tried to show that there was no untouchability in Mundra by going with him into the school premises. But at the public meeting held in the evening there was not a single 'bhadralok' ( a higher caste member ) in the block where untouchables were sitting. All the Muslims, all the volunteers, the teacher of the untouchable school himself, and even our host, a millionaire who had traversed Zanzibar and other foreign lands and repeatedly claimed that he did not believe in untouchability, one and all, were sitting in the bhadralok block ! The welcome that the host and two other gentlemen accorded to Gandhiji was thus nothing but a hollow show. It is possible that they might be imagining that their eulogistic epithets like 'vishvavandya' (world-revered), 'pratahsmaraniya' ( holy enough to be remembered in the morning ), 'punyashloka' ( a holy man the utterance of whose name is regarded as auspicious ) were appreciated by Gandhiji like showers of flowers on him, but, in fact, they pierced his vitals like arrows. From every word that Gandhiji spoke at Mundra, his anguish was dripping out like drops of blood.

1-11-1925

Gandhiji said :

"The times have come when I must begin my speech with the words "Untouchable brothers !" It is no longer possible to start it with the address "Hindu and Muslim brothers," because they have become mutual enemies and there is no sense in calling them brothers. All I can do, at present, is to address an appeal to my God to make my old beginning 'Hindu and Muslim brothers' meaningful.

"But before I came to Cutch, it was never necessary to open my speech in my present way of "Untouchable brothers and sisters and those other Hindu brothers and sisters who sympathize with them," as I have been compelled to do here. The question that troubles Cutch is agitating all the Hindus of India. I have gone right up to Rawalpindi in the north, to the tip of

Kanyakumari in the south, to Dibrugadh ( in Assam ) in the east and to Karachi in the west. But nowhere else did a situation ever arise that compelled me to address my meeting in the way I have been doing here. That is so because nowhere else has this question assumed the form it has in Cutch. The clouds began to gather ever since our arrival at Bhuj. As soon as Mundra received the news of what happened at Bhuj, it sent a wire to Sri Kantiprasad, Secretary of the Reception Committee, asking him, "Are you not making a hotch-potch ( of caste-Hindus and untouchables ? )" Such accusations can come only from that place where people are possessed with doubts and suspicions, where they are shying at their very shadows. When the problem arose first at Bhuj, I congratulated it for finding a straight way out, but my heart refused to congratulate other towns for copying Bhuj. What happened at Bhuj was the result of a sudden turn of events. But if you wish to turn a provisional solution of an unforeseen situation into a permanent feature by its adoption at every meeting, I have but to refrain from applauding your move and but to express my regret for it. It is at once my business and my duty to give out my views frankly both to Princes and their subjects. In fact, it is our duty to have no mental reservations in our talks with our mother, son, wife or any body else. I, therefore, decided that it was wrong on my part to desist from disclosing the thing that is revolving in my mind, since I have to be answerable for my acts to that Person Who notes down the credit and debit items of my life every moment. So I must tell you candidly what I think of your behaviour in the past and the present. Your telegram, I must say, transgressed the bounds of civility and propriety. I, therefore, dictated the answer that nobody compelled anybody else to make a hotch-potch but that those who held the custom of untouchability as sinful would definitely sit with untouchables. It is bad form to call me to a place where the whole population believes in untouchability. It is an insult to me to call me to a town where untouchables receive no consideration at all.

"On coming here I heard that there was a school for unto-



untouchable children here. I imagined that, at least, there the untouchables must be getting their meed of service by the higher castes. But for that school all the credit and all my thanks go to the Minister, Ibrahim Saheb ( a Muslim ) and none whatever to the Hindu community. Its existence is rather a shame than anything else for Hindus. If a Muslim builds a temple of Lord Shiva for me, I must be ashamed of it. I was happy to see the spinning and weaving work going on in that school, but immediately it struck me, "Who deserves the reward for this act of goodness ? Neither Hindus nor myself." Can my spiritual thirst be satisfied, if a Muslim chants the Gayatri mantra ( a Vedic invocation to the Sun or the Creator ) for me ? It would be satisfied only when a Brahmin approaches me and tells me, "I will recite the *mantra*." There was one such occasion in my life during my early days in the Ashram. I was on my death-bed. I had not attained the state which could provide me spiritual comfort from the chant of Ram-nam going on within. I was, therefore, seized at that time with the desire to listen to the Bhagwadgita. But I did not call Imam Saheb ( a Muslim Ashramite ). I called Vinoba ( Vinoba Bhave, now the famous 'Bhoodan' leader ). But here it is a Khoja ( a Muslim ) who is doing the work a Hindu ought to do and no Hindu cares a pin for untouchables. I see them right in front of me, but there is none so poor to do them reverence by sitting in their block except only the guests ! Even those who were moving about with me all day long have thrown out these untouchables to the winds and are sitting in the block of 'bhadraloks'. If you tear my heart just now, you will find it brimming with tears and saying, "Alas ! What kind of religion this Hinduism must be, since nobody has any feeling for untouchables, since not one Hindu in the whole town rushes to their aid !"

"Differences in views are nothing new, but one should not cross the bounds of good manners on that account. I ought not to be invited to a place where the difference is so acute that there is no meeting ground at all. The relationship between

us—the Ali Brothers and myself—is very cordial, but we never discuss the subject of our religions. How should I persuade him to accept my religion of non-violence? I can show its excellence only by my silent behaviour. If I go beyond it, it would be transgressing the limits of propriety. They too may think it would be good if I became a Muslim, but have not whispered a word to say that I should be one and recite the *Kalma*. How could I unreservedly put my daughter on their knees, if they did any such thing? Neither of us must insult the other's religion by asking him to renounce it. Maulana Shaukat Ali is a man of huge proportions, in weight and size. It is troublesome to him even to bend down to do his *namaz*. And yet in our tours he manages to perform it even on the narrow railway berths and thus suggests to me by action alone what kind of religion his is. And I too can show him the beauty of my religion only by my acts. Let us take a lesson from this example and keep our relations sweet.

“But that can't be done by calling me in this way. You believe in one *dharma*, I in another. We may certainly love each other, but there is no common ground to meet. It is not merely a gulf, but a big ocean that yawns between us. You had better go to my Ashram at Ahmedabad to know my views than invite me here and give me a reception of this kind. I for one should be called only by those who have the service of untouchables at heart and want to know something about it. But why should those people call me who will not sit by the side of untouchables even for a moment? I am so deeply moved at the sight of the religion you are observing at present that I cry out in my heart, “May this religion be destroyed!” Just as there was an Englishman who prayed for the defeat of England during the Boer War, just as though Bhishma was on the side of Kauravas the blessings of his heart went to the Pandavas, just as Lord Krishna's blessings rained exclusively on Pandavas, so it is my prayer to God to destroy Hinduism, if it means untouchability and nothing else. I had once warned even my wife, “If your religion differs from mine, the right thing is to build two



different cottages for ourselves, but please don't ask me to keep out Laxmi ( the untouchable daughter adopted by Gandhiji ) from mine. And on my part I will not insist on your allowing her into yours." Since one and all of you felt yourselves polluted by touching untouchables, it was your *dharma* to keep away from me and learn my views from my writings. And if you are intent on having my '*darshan*' ( sight of a holy image or man ), you can have it from a distance. I am India's slave. I can stand alone and unfriended in my service of my religion. But even if the whole world is against me, I cannot afford to live, if I have to forsake my religion for it. It was, therefore, your duty to tell me pointblank, "You need not come here. Let Americans make much of you as a Mahatma and have you in their midst." What is the sense in calling me 'world-revered'? If there is anything worth reverence in me, it is my Satyagraha. And Satyagraha does not mean revolt against the Englishman. It means that awareness of my *dharma* which was born in 1887 and has been growing ever since. In that year, 1887, my caste threatened me with excommunication, if I crossed the seas and went to England. I told them "Do what you will, I am resolved upon going to England." My Satyagraha starts from then. This Satyagraha against the government is only a fraction of my real Satyagraha, because my first Satyagraha was launched against the elders of my caste, whom I revered like my father. You would have been right in calling me here to clearly understand the essence of that Satyagraha. Whatever I am filled with is that spirit of Satyagraha and its concomitants—love for untouchables and Khadi. You should have nothing to do with me unless these things are dear to you also.

"I am reminded here of that Cutchi couple. Late Sri Bhagwanjibhai would tell me that at least in Rajkot there should be only one head-wear—that of the Khadi cap. But far from that standard Khadi is entirely absent here. I don't find one percent of the Khadi I expected to see here. The untouchables have lost their profession and are bewailing their lot. I have put their complaint before the Maharao and I put it before

you now. They know a skilful art. But they are accused of stealing from the yarn given to them for weaving. But think, friends, think ! Let him first cast a stone who is without sin among us. If they pilfer pennies, we steal pounds. When all of us are in the same boat, why single them out for dishonesty ?

“That is why I say, don’t make much of these things and rob them of their livelihood. Sprinkle water on their Khadi if you must, ( to purify it from the untouchable’s contact ), but buy only that for your use. Nobody cares to do even that today. Then again you say, money collected in Cutch must be used up in Cutch only. Why don’t you then collect that fund yourselves ? Why give me anything at all ? But do you know what Vallabhbhai says ? He asks you in return, “Where did you amass your wealth ? In Cutch or outside ?” Cutchis have given me large sums in Khadagpur, Calcutta, Jangbar (Zanzibar), South Africa and other places, but nowhere did they impose any such condition. And yet I am compelled to hear such a preposterous demand now that I am in Cutch. And I hear it only from millionaires ! I can understand an untouchable telling me that the donation from his savings may be used in Cutch only. But these poor untouchables have never uttered a word like that. It is only the millionaires who make that condition ! You make a loud noise about the 500 rupees you sent to that meek, unassuming worker Gokuldas and tell him now, “Take these 500 more, but don’t pester us any more.” I can put up with the women of Mundra if they say so. But you ? You have traversed the seas as much as I. How can you plead your inability to give anything more ? Why not rather tell me : you don’t want to give me a penny ? I don’t like this close-fisted attitude towards me. I took birth in a bania community, learnt his art (of doing everything for selfish gain) and buried it. I was bred up in Kathiawar (then a county of hundreds of small States) knew all the arts of Machiavellian statecraft and threw them fathoms deep into the sea. I understood the vices of my caste and washed my hands of them.



And now I can fearlessly say to millionaires or princes or paupers, "Don't you play the bania with me. Give up your diplomacy or duplicity. Play straight and fair with me.

"An untouchable told me, do what I might, his castemen were going to eat carrion, so long as society compelled them to drag away dead animals. I love such a plain speaker. But what shall I do with one who vows before me not to take putrid flesh and then breaks it? I would be impelled to go on a fast of 28 days against the breach. As the dead body of Bradlaw (a well-known athiestic Englisman) was being carried away, somebody questioned a pastor: "Where is God? Show us." What can the poor clergyman say in reply? In the same way, if there is none like myself to offer Satyagraha against injustice and untruth, somebody would certainly cry out, "Does God exist at all?" But He is and is Omnipresent. That is why Muslims call Him "*Ar Rahim*" (the Merciful) and Hindus '*Vishnu*' (the Preserver). Everybody knows that God does exist. Only nobody can show him in concrete form. So what can a man like myself do against an oath-breaker except to fast unto death? Such an untouchable will have to stand before the Divine Judge and answer for his perjury. Who can dare to question Mahatmas like myself for their acts? If a Mahatma indulges in wine or women, there are Tulsidas and others who will sing "Saints are sinless. They must not be blamed for their acts." But you must never break your vow. I saw a piece performed by the untouchable boys in Seth Ibrahim's school. One of the players says, "I will give up the tanner's profession now. I want to learn the ABC." But I say this is a wrong attitude. On the contrary, I want to make you more proficient in your profession. If any teacher asks you to forget your occupation and learn up the three R's, tell him, "Teach us our profession first and then talk of reading, writing" and arithmetic. Because the age is now coming when, not only the untouchable, but every Hindu also has got to learn tannery for the sake of cow-protection. There is no shame, no insult, no humiliation in taking to that profession. Have I not cleaned latrines

myself ? I have cleaned latrines used by many respectable men like you. And it is because I have often done the work of cleaning other people's latrines, that I get my commode washed by such a high-caste Nagar Brahmin as Daulatram. Otherwise, what a great difference there is between his caste and mine ! (Nagars belong to the highest sub-caste even among Brahmins). It is I who should rather clean his stools, and yet I let him do mine without feeling the least ashamed, because I never did ashamed and never would even now, in cleaning latrines of quite a number of high-caste men like you. That work is one of great service and not derogatory at all. We revere our mother as holy enough to be remembered in our morning prayers, because of the very fact that she washes us of our dirt. The scavenger does the very same work. Why should we not respect the scavenger also as worthy of our remembrance as our mother in the early prayer hours ? At the same time I agree that the scavenger must take a bath after cleaning latrines.

"After coming here, I am going through experiences that show the miserliness and cruelty of the people of Cutch. You recite the Bhagwadgita's verses, the Gayatri Mantra, and the Namokar Mantra ( a Jain mantra for liberation ), but there is no room in your heart for the untouchable. The religion which you follow is neither Hinduism nor Jainism. Should not he who exerts himself to save a bug, be ready to save that helpless and meek cow-the untouchable ? Be at least a little awake, learn at least something. What is worth learning from me is my love and not my strength to give a fight. My fighting strength is only a small fraction of my real life. And even that strength is the outcome of my truth, my sympathy, my love. All my fights, and fighting spirit are worth nothing without that love. Only that man will be able to gain the blessings of the cow and the untouchable, who lives a life of love. Remove the coating over your eyes, raise up the curtains that keep your hearts dark. Don't be completely inert. God help you !"

8-11-1925

हारे को हरिनाम ।

सुने री मैंने निर्बल के बल राम ॥



“Grant my prayer, O God, Thou art the strength of the weak. The refuge of the lost and beaten.”

—Surdas.<sup>1</sup>

शील, संतोष ने क्षमा खड्ग धरी ।

धर्म ढाल जाली रे, भजन भड़के भड़वुं छे ।

“With the sword of character,  
Contentment and forgiveness,  
With the shield of dharma  
With the bombs of hymns  
We will fight the Great Battle.

—Dhiro.<sup>2</sup>

After the outburst of his aggrieved feelings at the meeting in Mundra, Gandhiji told Messrs. Manilal Kothari and Mansingbhai that they should take courage and drop the programme of his visit to Anjar, if there was going to be only a repetition of the scene enacted at Mundra. But in the end he thought fit to visit Anjar. It was good that he did, for, otherwise the drama that began when he set his foot on the soil of Cutch would have ended without a proper finish.

Immediately on reaching Anjar Gandhiji began his inquiry. He started talking with the President of the Reception Committee with whom he had put up.

“Who is the President ?”

“I myself.”

“Well, what is going to be the arrangement at the meeting here ?”

“Exactly according to the instructions you had given in Bhuj. There will be two divisions and those who wish will sit with untouchables.”

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1. Surdas was one of the greatest Hindi poet-saints of mediaeval times. As he was a blind beggar, the blind beggar of India calls himself ‘Surdas’ to this day, owing to his fame as a saint

2. Dhiro was a mediaeval poet-saint of Gujarat.

"Where will you sit ?"

"I shall have to sit apart."

"Where then was the need to call me here ? I am really sorry, Laxmi (Gandhiji's untouchable daughter) is not with me here. But ever since I heard of the trend the discussion of this question was taking here, I have been wanting to call her by a telegram, if that were possible. I have been feeling that her presence here is so necessary."

"But no objection would have been raised even then. All those who are in your company can certainly put up with you."

"But in the *public* meeting you can't sit with her ! Well then, will there be others at the meeting willing to sit with me by the side of untouchables ?"

The President was put out. "I think, there will be some."

"This gentleman will sit with you," said someone as he pointed at the Secretary.

"Did you decide just now to sit with me or had already decided ?"

"Already."

Though that was the answer, it was faltering in tone. Gandhiji, therefore, said :

"Well then, I suggest you should either drop the meeting altogether or hold two meetings—the first in the untouchable locality where those of you who like may go ; and the second tomorrow morning exclusively of those who want to retain untouchability. But you can even call these latter right here. I shall tell them here what I want to."

"Let us hold the general public meeting first and give you a welcome address in it."

"No welcome address at all and the first must only be of the meeting of untouchables," emphasized Gandhiji.

The President was a dialectic. He pressed his point.

"So those who do not agree with you on one point but accept many others are debarred from giving you a welcome ?



All of us have a right to learn something from your life, by honouring you."

Gandhiji had, therefore, to elucidate the principle about giving honours and receptions.

"I can accept honour from you, only when you love my first and best love. How can I be interested in any address you give me, when you keep aloof and regard as untouchables those whom I love as my own brothers and insults to whom touch me as insults to my own self? Is there any meaning in that reception? I know, you will question me, 'Do Englishmen accept your principle? Why then do you accept their honour when they invite you to deliver speeches before them?' But when they request me to speak to them, they tell me plainly that I shall meet with a strong opposition, even in bitter language. And yet it is my experience that, inspite of all this warning, in the talk itself there is hardly any bitterness. And see how they respect the guest. Though they take flesh and wine, they would take a vegetarian dinner on that day for the sake of respecting my feelings. Only a few among them may happen to be like the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot, ( he took meat and wine at the lunch where he had invited Gandhiji as a guest ), but that is exceptional. As a general rule, they observe the etiquette very well. But here in Cutch, I had quite novel experiences. At Bhuj, I suggested what was an immediate solution of an unexpected situation. But it is wrong to make that expedient a permanent feature. That is something like this : I say to my son, "You can abuse me, if you like"; and literally he does so day in and out. At the first meeting, at Mandvi, I stated, "Riddhagarji could have at least thrown the address into my hands, without touching me ( rather than leave the meeting )." So at the next day's meeting, the President took me at my word and actually threw it ! And Mundra ? It was the limit. And now you are suggesting for here the same arrangement as at Mundra....."

"But if we hear you repeatedly, it cannot fail to produce an

effect. Cannot repeated hammering win over the people to the speaker's views ?”

“Don't take me for a Christian missionary, who goes on prating even before one who doesn't care to listen. He who wants to know my views, wants to discuss them with me, should go to Sabarmati, when I am there. But in this situation, I have no mind to accept an address from you or be carried in a procession. Bhujpar people caught the point. They said they would neither hold a people's meeting nor give me an address and asked me to hold a meeting in the untouchable quarter. Quite a respectable meeting was held there, and many non-untouchables of the town attended. You can do exactly the same thing here. If Hindu society does not approve of my principle, it may give up honouring me with an address. I will go to the untouchable locality, stay with them, talk and play and dance with them. There should be no inhibition in you in accepting this arrangement. You may act according to your beliefs and I may go on giving shocks to Hindu society. Society would not progress, if I didn't give it repeated shock in this manner.”

“But here we have already fixed up everything. The Reception Committee has passed a resolution for the arrangement. The people are eagerly wanting to give you a welcome address. I admit, the reason for making this arrangement is our inability to understand and appreciate your real worth still.”

“How can you ? People will understand me only after my death.”

This is only the summary of a long talk. At the end Gandhiji again said : “ As I have suggested, hold the meeting in the untouchable quarter today, let the believers in untouchability meet me tomorrow and the address programme be cancelled. But if you strongly dislike my idea, well, let your programme stand.”

The first meeting in the untouchable quarter ! That was too much for the caste-Hindus. They may perhaps accept everything else, but this priority to untouchables it was impossible for them to stomach. So in the end, the President



said he would hold a meeting of the Reception Committee and left.

The Reception Committee discussed the question for 2 or 3 hours and finally decided that Gandhiji might be seated on a raised platform in the midst of untouchables, that the president should read the welcome address though he might sit aloof, that eight members of the Reception Committee should sit among untouchables and that the Sheriff who was to hand over the address should touch Gandhiji for putting it into his hands, but take a bath after going home. Gandhiji was informed of all these decisions in time, before the meeting was held, but made no comment, save only this: "If you wish to consult my wishes, adopt the plan I have suggested. But if you insist that I should do what you want, all right I accept." The President said it was the pressing request of the Reception Committee that Gandhiji should conform to its wishes.

So the meeting was held in the evening. The arrangement was fairly satisfactory. It showed both respect and discrimination. After the address was read, Gandhiji was about to go down to take it, but the Sheriff himself came up the steps and gave the address hand to hand. Gandhiji's speech in reply deserves re-production verbatim, but even if I can perform that feat (Sri Mahadevbhai took only long hand notes), how can I depict in language the wonderful charm of Gandhiji's voice that seemed to come from the depths of his heart, the atmosphere of peace that stretched to infinity, and the raptures of the sunset that provided a perfect background?

After thanking the people for the address he said :

"This is my last public meeting in Cutch. There are still two or three items in the programme, but definitely, this is my last public meeting. This is not the moment for me to repeat those things which I have been harping on in a thousand ways from a thousand platforms. You have come to know of my views from various sources, in various ways. To repeat them *ad nauseam* has no meaning.

“But let me say this. As in all parts of India, so everywhere in Cutch also, I have experienced nothing but love, love, and only love—personally for me. I have received everywhere in Cutch more service to my own self than I ever needed. Wherever I went, sisters and brothers vied with one another in their zeal and exertion to provide for my slightest wants, to see that I was perfectly comfortable and happy. But you should know that I did not come here for personal services and comforts. I don't roam from place to place all over India in order to get any kind of service to my-self. It is rather the other way. The more I am pampered by personal service, the more I am provided with ease and comfort, the greater is the burden that falls upon me, the greater the debt I have got to repay. To save me from all this you should provide me with only those things which I think I need. It perturbs me, when I am given more volunteers and more bullock-carts than I want. I must say, Cutch has left nothing undone in rendering service to me individually. In that matter Cutch does not stand behind other provinces in any way.

“But to my mind that is nothing. The thing I long for, pant for, thirst for, is quite different. God provides every creature, from the tiny ant to the huge elephant the feed it needs. And He will go on doing so. So we do nothing out of the way, when we fill our stomachs, provide ourselves with our physical wants. That is what we do in common with the animal world. Perhaps the ant feels more happy when it secures a grain for itself, than we, when we take rich dishes.

“Hence, while accepting your overflowing love I say, ‘Please don't crush me with it.’ I don't want to speak about the love that would please me. If I do, it will pain you. I know you will hear me even then, but I will keep silent over it.

“Every religious scripture in the world says, when sorrows afflict a man, he should remember God. When her husbands were unable to help her, Draupadi (wife of the Pandavas) appealed to Lord Krishna in her distress and was saved. When Sitaji was kept a captive in the Ashok forest outside Lanka,



she received strength and consolation from Lord Rama's name. My friends in the jail also used to forget their sorrows and feel comforted through this remedy of God's remembrance.

"There was with me in jail a well-educated simple-hearted young man—Shankarlal Banker. It was not the jail life but his own mind that troubled him. Countless stormy waves tossed in his mind and he was all agony within. What did he do for it ? Regardless of the stinging cold of winter he would get up at 4 a. m. in the early morning, light a lamp and start spinning. But I don't propose to talk of even the spinning wheel today.

"What I wish to point out is the other thing he did side by side with spinning. He chanted the name of Rama. That chant removed his gloom altogether and he became cheerful and gay. Such a wonderful transformation came over him that the jail-warder would often go to him but return disappointed and tell me : 'Oh he is always buried in himself ! He lives in his own world—of himself and his spinning wheel ! How can you chat with him ?'

I have never before spoken about Ram-nam in my public meetings. Where men of all religions gather, one should not touch a topic that appeals to only one section. Ram-nam may fill the Hindu heart, but will not touch Englishmen and Mussalmans. And things have come to a pass at present when the Mussalman hesitates to utter the word 'Ishwara,' and the Hindu 'Allah.' Today however, with my apology to all those who have no charm for it, I wish to fall back upon Ram-nam. I want to unburden my grief before my 'Ishtadeva' (=Chosen Deity. The Ishtadeva theory is one of the results of the tolerant spirit in Hinduism. Every Hindu chooses for worship the form of God he loves and no other Hindu arises any objection ) and to pray to Him to grant me the kind of joy and happiness I crave for. That is the one and only thing in which Hindu society can heartily join me. And so my speech ends now and I want to pour out my heart before Him. Every morning and evening this *dhun* (chanting of God's name or some mantra )

is loudly repeated in the Ashram. I request you, both the untouchables here and those who feel polluted at their touch, to join me in this congregational singing. We take Ram-nam both at the beginning and the end of every good undertaking. In the same way let us end with Ram-nam today, at this last meeting. My prating also comes now to the end."

The atmosphere was then charged with the melodious chant of :

Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram,  
Patita Pavan Sita Ram.<sup>1</sup>

'A peace that passeth understanding' pervaded for a time after the chanting ended.

"He said not a word about untouchability, Khadi or spinning," commented one as they were dispersing. "Let alone that. No appeal for the Deshbandhu Fund even !" wondered another. But Gandhiji wanted but to throw his eyes up that day. From the people he asked for nothing. All he did was to address his appeal, to lodge his complaint, in the Durbar of his Maker, to fight iniquity with 'the bombs of hymns !'

But let not the reader, from my account of the Cutch tour, be carried away with the impression that Cutch possessed the monopoly of this pollution attitude or that there was nothing in Cutch worth a notice except the shock the people felt from the opening of that question. By no means does Cutch possess the monopoly of the no-touch attitude. In fact, the bar of untouchability between farmers and Meghwals and other untouchable classes seems hardly to exist in actual practice. Farmers cannot do without the help of untouchable labourers and they all do the farming work in co-operation. It is not possible to imagine that no occasion requiring physical touch of untouchables ever arises. Nor can it be said that after every time he touches an untouchable, the farmer takes a bath. Had the

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1. Ram and Krishna are worshipped in one and the same breath as both God and Man, the couplet means :

'O, king Rama, the Best of Raghus, of the Raghu race !

O Redeemer of fallen souls ! O Couple Divine—Seeta and Ram !



organisers not made it a point to secure the patronage of the bigwigs and, without making any fuss, kept Gandhiji's meetings open to whoever wished to attend, perhaps untouchability would not have appeared to us in the highly aggravated form it did in the meetings of Cutch. At Bhujpar, for instance, quite a lot of non-untouchables attended the meeting held in the untouchable quarter and there were women too among them. And so at Anjar. The evening meeting held in the untouchable quarter was attended by a sizable number of the common people of the town. To put it briefly, it seems the people of Cutch have accepted the maxim : "A sin is no sin, unless it is committed openly." There is no other explanation but this for the rich gentleman's attempt to throw the address into Gandhiji's hands from above. I use the word 'attempt' purposely, because Gandhiji did not catch his idea and he touched him at the time ! And the decision that the Sheriff in Anjar should take a bath at home after giving the town address hand-to-hand points to the same principle. Though he was fully aware of Gandhiji's non-conformist ways he often touched Gandhiji at home, because he was the host and that was all done behind the scene. But to touch him when he touched untouchables before his very eyes and in a public meeting to boot ! That was what he would not or could not put up with. And the State too supports the people in the observance of this queer principle. There is a narrow gauge railway line between Bhuj and Anjar. Untouchables are debarred from using the passenger trains running on it. They have to travel only in the open-to-the-sky carriages 'reserved' for them in the goods trains ! But there is no wonder if this injustice in railway accommodation also is enforced by this State, when it has given the untouchables the monopoly of prostitution and has connived at the iniquity of their oppression by the 'Mahajan' ( official group of caste-elders ).

Many States are fond of having mottoes, specially great States like Britain which has a motto that it honours only by its regular breach. Our Indian States also follow suit and have mottoes or

principles as guides of conduct. For instance, Bhavanagar has "Human effort and God's grace" and Travancore, "Dharma is the only strongest power." In the same way Cutch has chosen the motto, "Courage and Confidence." It is strange that that State which believes in the sanctity of old ways has accepted this English maxim as its motto. That is by the way, but the answer to the question whether the State follows that ideal in practice, depends upon the meaning you give to that motto. You can certainly stick to the old ruts with 'Courage and Confidence' and resist every reform, good, bad, or indifferent. You can also publicly admit your error and rectify it in pursuance of that same motto. But the State's conduct at present with regard to 'Courage and Confidence' consists only in inflexible adherence to all that is old as nothing but gold. Were it not so, can there be any other reason for continuing the Quixotic exchange rate, the senseless customs duties, the monopoly of prostitution and other evils? But I must admit I do not know how long these three evils are continuing.

But my object in writing this is not to only point out the defects of that State. It is to let the reader have some knowledge about Cutch. Gandhiji was informed that there was famine in Cutch. Famine there certainly is, because in that God-forsaken land people have always got to wrestle with nature. Not that there are not a lot of big brooks, but they are all dry except in the monsoon. Moreover, the rainfall is scant in Cutch and when it rains, it does not rain but pour, and the water flows away swiftly into the sea through these large brooks. So it is always for the people a fight against heavy odds to maintain themselves. They have to put in very strenuous labour and to emigrate to other parts of India in times of famine. In search of employment large number of farmers leave Cutch not merely for Bombay or Sindh (then a part of India), but even for far-away Khadagpur in Bengal. And they are not ashamed to do any kind of work that falls to their lot. The Cutchis told us that we did not see the real Cutch, which means Vagad and Bani. Vagad has been familiarized by our



( Gujarati ) poet Dalpatram through his line which says Vagad produces 'mung' ( a pulse ) and 'bajri' ( millet ). Bani is the land of herdsmen. These people possess large herds of cattle and their granaries are full of milk and ghee, but only in good seasons. They are 'meers' ( rich people ) today, when nature smiles upon them, and 'fakeers' ( poor beggars ) tomorrow, when it frowns. In times of plenty of greenery, they are, so to say, immersed in milk and ghee and treat their guests royally, but in distress they go away towards Sindh in the north with all their heads of cattle. This dry land cannot possibly produce sufficient corn, but the pressure on the land is eased by the heavy exodus of Cutchis in search of business. That makes the yield of 'mung' and 'bajri' sufficient for the permanent residents. Not only in Bani moreover but in the whole of Cutch, the peasant knows how to keep his cattle strong and healthy, and so, though the Cutchi farmer leads a life of hard struggle he is pretty well-off.

You cannot see perhaps anywhere else except in Kathiawar the strong, sturdy and handsome cattle that catch our eyes in Cutch. Cutchis take excellent care of their bullocks. Nowhere at all in Cutch did we see those disgusting nailed prods that are a common sight in Gujarat. And in order to spare their bullocks much strain from trudging along the hard hilly tracts of Cutch, they use carts light as air in weight. It is not difficult to build strong roads on the hard ground of hilly tracts. The roads in Maharashtra are beautiful, smooth, and well-built, and the hill-roads of Travancore are a marvel in beauty. But here, except for trunk motor routes, the State has not seen it fit to build any other pucca road. And just as the State alone can own motors in Cutch, so it has reserved for its own use most of these motor routes.

There may be hardly any field potentially as rich as Cutch for the production of Khadi. If the State reforms the rules for customs and other duties in a way that benefits the subjects, it can cover up the whole of Cutch with Khadi. There are three reasons for saying so. The cotton, the land yields, is excellent.

There are women who know even now the art of spinning; and the number of weavers in the State is large enough for its Khadi needs. If only enterprising Bhatias, Banias, Lohanas, and Memons (well-known businessmen's communities) regard it as their duty to patronize the Cutchi weavers and drive out foreign cloth, they can turn Cutch into a land of Khadi even without State-aid. It is reasonable to hope that Gandhiji's tour in Cutch will bring results as good for untouchability as for Khadi. There is no lack of public workers. I have already given the name of Smt. Sadhvibehn who spends all her time after Khadi. Some other names appear in my article further on. They and those others whose names have escaped my recollection can, if they are bent upon it, make Cutch completely independent of the need to import cloth.

Though that barren land makes the peasant's life one of sweat and toil, its dry air can make Cutch a health-resort for patients of chest diseases. But instead of taking advantage of this bracing air the Cutchi has left nothing undone in vitiating it—at least in the bigger villages and towns. Gandhiji referred to the uncleanness of Cutch at various meetings and is going to write quite a lot (in Navajivan) also. So let me drop the subject and proceed. Just as among all Indian States as well as British India, Travancore easily takes the first rank, in both cleanliness and education, so Cutch is the last even among the back-benchers. Those who have broken through the old rut and gone abroad to earn money have hardly any enthusiasm for raising the standard of education and hygiene among their brothers left at home. For the large population of Muslims the State conducts one single Urdu school and rich Muslims also have done practically nothing in the direction.

The extra disabilities and hardships under which untouchables as such suffer have been dealt with already, but the picture of their conditions has not been given. Many of them are weavers, but that occupation has fallen into sad straits. Not to speak of orders, they can't find buyers even when they hawk the Khadi they weave on their own. Many untouchables have



therefore, become wage earners on farms and some manage to earn a living by getting employed for different purposes like sawing wood etc. If addiction to wine is not totally absent among them it is certainly negligible in extent. But all of them eat putrid flesh.

Owing to the stir caused in society from Gandhiji's visit, there has been a significant awakening among untouchables. Wherever Gandhiji went, they were present in large numbers at his meetings. Their presence at Bhuj was sufficiently noticeable. At Kotda it grew large enough to frighten the President. And there were untouchables at Bhujpar who would give a rupee and some cowries to Gandhiji. The first reception of Mandvi moreover was given by untouchables. But the climax was reached at Anjar, where about seven or eight hundred untouchables came from villages far and near with a sizable number of women among them. When we met crowds walking on the road we had taken and asked them where they were going, they would reply in their patois : "Hasn't that Gandhi M'atma of Meghwals come ? There we are all going." A few of them went to Godhro for the sole purpose of meeting Gandhiji there in the evening. They narrated their woes—of the 'monopoly' and the slavery of the Mahajan. But their disabilities as untouchables had gone so deep into them and were suffered so long, that they were inured to them and they did not mention them at all ! To the question, "Will you give up putrid flesh ?" Gandhiji received from one who looked like the headman exactly the same answer as he did at Dhasa in Kathiawar.

"That is but the natural outcome of our profession, sir. It would end only if we can stop dragging away dead cattle."

"But you have to drag them away, not eat them. Do doctors who dissect dead bodies eat their flesh ? They dissect them for study and practice, but after their work is done, they become clean by washing their hands and having a bath."

"True. But ours is an ancestral, an age-long habit. How can we give it up ?"

"May you not give up even a bad habit ? I can't understand how you like its taste. We catch the disease of a rotten or diseased animal if we eat its flesh, you see, and are looked down upon as dirty people in addition. Can you not do with pulse, rice and bajri bread ?"

"Now, sir, let's us close the matter," said headman to evade the answer. But someone else said :

"Definitely we can. And we don't get much of putrid flesh either."

"How much do you get ? Do you get it daily ?"

"No, casually. If a tanner carries home a stray animal he would call us and distribute the flesh. We may get 2 or 3 lbs. per family. For the last four months we have got nothing whatever."

"Can you not then give up a thing you get so rarely ?"

That other man replied that some of those who were sitting there did abstain from putrid flesh. But the headman re-started his plea for taking it.

"That's an old habit with us. What's the use, besides, if we alone give it up ? Others are sure to continue."

"But can you not set an example ?"

"How sir ? We would be outcasted."

It was impossible to win him over. He was fond of putrid flesh.

But Mandvi's untouchables beat all the rest. When Riddhagarji's men drove them out of Brahmapuri, they went home talking among themselves : "We must now give up putrid flesh. Is not that the advice Ma'tma Gandhi gives us ?" And then, as I have already stated, at the meeting held the next evening twentyfive families sent to Gandhiji a note that they had taken the vow of abjuring putrid flesh, wine, and ordinary meat also. At Anjar also many of them expressed their desire to take the vow.

I have given the names of some of the workers. Let me refer to them a little more in detail. Sri Gokuldas, to whom Gandhiji gave the epithet, "Humble and meek like a cow,"



belongs to Mandvi. He is a Khadi enthusiast and spends a good amount of his money after Khadi and uplift of untouchables. He had set apart a definite portion of his wealth for spending it exclusively on these objects. He possesses not only the capacity to give money but to roam from village to village and work like a hardy labourer also. If only he gathers a little more courage and hardens his heart, his labour will be rewarded with richer results. The story and the advice<sup>1</sup>, "Don't actually bite but don't fail to hiss and frighten mischief-makers" must have been conceived for a God's good man like him, it seems. There is another worker Sri Damji, who provided for Gandhiji an excellent spinning-wheel. His service too is as commendable as that of Sri Gokuldas, but I could not get a chance to know him more intimately. I have talked of Sri Jivarambhai. For his love for untouchables, he has had to alienate himself from his close relatives, but that he does not care. He has the pluck to sacrifice his everything for the sake of a principle. That he gave away a hundred thousand rupees for Khadi need not lead us to think that he is a millionaire. The fact is, he gave away thereby a very large part of his wealth for the country. He contents himself now with earning just enough to make both ends meet. And now he serves untouchables and does other public works with the aid of some other charitable funds. Who can say, there goes a man of affluent means, when he sees this saintly Jivarambhai, roaming from village to village, eating the plentiful dust of their roads, and keeping miles away from fame?

And everybody knows Sri Mansinghbhai also. He earns money at Prome in Burma and spends a lot in public service. But now, it seems, he has resolved to clean Cutch, his 'home',

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1. A holy man gave a *mantra* to a serpent, asked it not to bite anybody and went his way. The serpent became entirely harmless thereafter. Mischievous boys came to know of it and belaboured the serpent with stones and sticks. The serpent, therefore, crept into its hole, was afraid to come out and began to starve. When, on return, the holy man saw its plight he said, "Don't bite, but show your fangs and hiss at trouble-makers"

from its dirt. Just as Sri Chaman's ( a Muslim ) donation for cow-protection was noteworthy, so was Sri Mansingbhai's gift of 1000 cowries for the Muslim Orphanage.

For Sri Mathuradas, it may be said that Gujarat gave him back to Cutch.

It has been stated that Sri Antani and other public servants of the Nagar community stood by our side to serve the people and thus incurred the risk of their ex-communication and that the Sheriff of Bhuj showed real courage. There is a vast field of work waiting to be ploughed by all the workers of Cutch. I do not remember the names of other servants of Cutch, but the total number of public workers there is not less (relatively) than in Gujarat. And there are seasoned women workers like Sadhvibehn also. If they follow up in practice Gandhiji's advice to work out his constructive programme, their work, even within the short period of one year, is likely to bear significant results in that compact and homogeneous area.

From among Muslim public workers, if any are likely to take up Khadi work, they are Messrs. Chaman and Lateef. Both are poets. The former is possessed with the prejudice that Khadi clothes spoil one's health. If he gets over it, he can do much work, as he is a man of truth and unaffected manners. It would be fine if Sri Lateef loses himself in public work and then, enriched by his experiences, gives their sweet ripe fruit to the people in the form of poems. It was a pleasing sight to see him mixed up among Hindu workers as completely as sugar in milk.

I was tempted to include two others among 'workers' but they are State officials and I put them in a different class. They are not 'friends' besides, but respected elders. Both of them are advanced in age and both are Brahmins. Both are men of character and courage and wear Khadi from top to toe. Both are much averse to the custom of untouchability. They are Vithaljibhai of the Education Department and Jayakrishna Indraji, the well-known botanist.



Vithaljibhai has grown grey in the service of Cutch. He is 68 and Jayakrishnabhai 77. Never the less, they walk a young man's gait, chest-forward and erect, and like him dream glorious dreams of doing great and good things in future.

After our arrival in Cutch, the castemen of Vithaljibhai honoured him by driving him out of his caste. He is a Sanskrit scholar and has added a feather to his cap by his avowed love for untouchables. He has served the State long enough now. May his resolve to spend his whole time in future in the service of the people be implemented soon !

Sri Jayakrishnabhai's service to the people is as great as that to the State. I call him an '*avadhuta*'. Just as an *avadhuta* is completely absorbed in God, so Jayakrishnabhai has lost himself in his favourite work. He can never forget that his county of Cutch is arid, thirsting for greenery. Quite like Gandhiji, who is ever eager to know the number of new spinners and wearers of Khadi, Jayakrishnabhai is tireless in his efforts to plant new and newer trees in Cutch. Gandhiji wants to visualise the image of his Rama dancing on the spindle of a spinning wheel. In the same way Jayakrishnabhai worships every tree and every shrub as the veritable manifestation of his God. He would give us the history of the planting and growth of every tree that we passed by and his heart blooms as much, at the sight of its growth, as does the mother's at her child's. He set apart a piece of ground along the road to the royal palace which lay outside Mandvi and got Gandhiji to perform the seed-planting ceremony there. He cherishes the dream that the people will follow in the footsteps of Gandhiji and make Cutch a land of plentiful water and foliage. He may be advising a thousand persons everyday to plant trees.

And his study of botany ? That is as deep as that of Faber, the microbiologist. Jayakrishnabhai knows everything about every kind of vegetable life, just as Faber knew of the habits, abodes, instincts, feelings of joy and grief etc. of every little insect. Europe appreciated Faber and made his name famous.

Nobody knows if or when Cutch does the same about Jayakrishnabhai.

Day and night he is engrossed in experiments to fertilize the uncultivable, saltish soil of Cutch. We may be tired of hearing, but not he of speaking of his experiments to settle the sand from flying away, of planting those trees whose roots go deep and make the soil hard, and of showing that forests of trees affect the atmosphere and attract rain towards themselves.

And yet he is not merely a serious 'avadhuta'. He is as full of jokes and laughter as Dr. P. C. Roy ( a well-known Indian chemist ). By way of decorating the bower in which he got Gandhiji to sow the seeds of the 'vad' ( banian ) and 'peepal' trees and the 'tulsi' plant, he had hung on an arch some 'indravarnas' — a fruit that is as bitter in taste as is beautiful in look. "Why this fruit in particular ?" I inquired. "But do we ever have any other fruit here ? Besides, I wanted to show Gandhiji that we Cutchis are like these indravarnas. He saw during the meeting last night how very similar in qualities we both are. I can say from experience that he was wrong. And if, from his wider and deeper knowledge of Cutchis, his castigation of his people is correct, let me say that Gandhiji's resolve, to turn 'by his everflowing stream of tears of love' ( a quotation from Mirabai, a saint-poetess of Mewar and Gujarat ) those bitter Cutchi indravarnas into sweet mangoes is even firmer than that of Jayakrishnabhai to bring about a green revolution in the barren and saltish county of Cutch.

As I am writing the incident that happened today, I am reminded of our ( Gujarati ) proverb, "It is the scholar who errs and the swimmer who is drowned." But I must add that I never make the proud claim of being a scholar and, as for swimming, I know less than nothing. All the same, is there any wonder if I call myself the worst possible example of that proverb, 'the scholar errs etc.,' when I suddenly forget the precept I hear day and night from Gandhiji which is also the one that I myself am accustomed to put before everybody as well as



the one that a child can learn from the slightest acquaintance with Gandhiji ?

It is best to give what follows in the Gujarati Diary in Sri Mahadevbhai's own words in English. Hence, the following article in "Young India", d. 26-11-1925 is reproduced here.

### 'OUR TIME A TRUST !'

Often in these columns have I reported Gandhiji having said to various audiences on various occasions that our time is a trust. But the lesson was burnt deep into me the other day, only when I myself happened to be the offender. I have often laughed at these people's expense. Let them laugh today at mine.

Outwardly it is a story of how I began and ended the study of French. It is really a story of my own humiliation and shame—which is all the deeper, because 'how much the more and the better thou knowest, so much the more rigorously shalt thou therefore be judged.' The desire of learning French had possessed me ever since I went to jail, but Urdu had rightly a better claim, especially where the opportunities of learning it were so great. And I knew that to learn Urdu or Hindustani, our *lingua franca*, was a duty, whilst the other was no more than 'a desire of knowing.' And yet the desire was there, and lifted up its head whenever there was an opportunity. I saw one in the arrival at our Ashram of Miss Madeleine Slade and lost no time in seizing it. She has come to serve, to give and not to take, and the moment she said she would love to be of some service to me, I expressed my desire to learn French. 'Certainly,' she said, and without the least little thought I started on my study. The first lesson on the articles and simple verbs was given, and I eagerly went for the second. To have learnt to understand sentences as 'Ce mot est tres difficile' and 'Ce mot n'est pas si difficile' after only one day of study was a thing to be proud of. I asked my teacher whether Gandhiji knew that I had begun French. She said, he did and that 'he was amused and surprised.'

'Surprised' gave me a sort of alarm and I began to imagine in my mind what was coming. And scarcely had I finished the second lesson when the message came that I was wanted by Gandhiji.

I went, of course, in fear and trembling, though hardly prepared for all that followed. There was some casual inquiry and I thought only my conscience had made a coward of me. But no. The storm came almost as soon as I had begun to reassure myself. 'So you have begun French?' he asked smiling, disguising all his indignation. I smiled an affirmative answer. 'I thought, when she was making the appointment with you yesterday, that you were going to her to give her a lesson in Hindi. But she told me this morning, as I asked her how she had spent her time, that she gave you a French lesson for an hour. Do you know what I told her?' he asked, still smiling. 'Yes' I said, 'she told me you were 'amused and surprised.' 'Well then,' said he, 'I tell you what I said. I said 'Caesar aimed at the crown and failed.' And then began a volley of questions. 'What have you begun learning French for? Because Miss Slade, French scholar, is here? Or you want to read Romain Rolland in French? Or to read our French correspondence?' 'No. I have been long waiting to learn French. French-knowing friends told me that it was easy to learn the language, and useful too.' 'Well', he said rather sternly now, 'do you know that not all Englishmen do not know French, and the best of them are content to read the French authors in translations? And much of the best French literature is turned into English as soon as it is published. There was a pause for a minute or two. 'How long do you think you will take to learn it?' 'About six months' I am told. 'How many hours?' 'An hour each day,' 'Regularly?' 'Yes.' 'Do you think you can get an hour each day whilst we tour about?' 'Hardly, but I think I might snatch some time, whilst actually travelling.' 'Indeed? Are you sure?' I hesitated. 'And now that you want to learn French, I must keep you free each day for an hour, should I not?' This was



more than I could bear. 'No', said I energetically, 'you need not. I shall find time somehow.' 'You will not find time' he said, now driving the point home, 'you will steal time'. I was silenced. 'Don't you think so?' he asked expecting a confession. 'I do,' said I, 'I could give to spinning all the time I give to French.' 'Yes; there is many another thing. But when we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle, how could you think of learning French? You may read as much French as you like after Swaraj. But until then—'

'I stop it from today,' I said expecting to be forgiven and allowed to go. 'But that is not all,' he said. 'The charge-sheet is not yet over. Do you know that Miss Slade has come here, having burnt all her boats? Do you know that her sacrifice for our cause is greater than that of any one of us? Do you know that she is here to learn and study and serve and give all her time to the service of our people and thereby her own people, and that nothing that happens at her own home will swerve her from her appointed task here? Every minute of her time is, therefore, doubly precious and it is for us to give her as we can. She wants to know every thing about us, she must master Hindustani. How else is she to do it, unless we help her in making the best of her time? She may be quite willing to oblige us, but our duty is to give her as much as we can. Our own time is sacred enough. Hers is a more sacred trust. Rather than indulge in the luxury of learning French, I would expect you to give her an hour in Hindi, Sanskrit, or such other thing.'

Clearly there was no answer for me. I hung down my head in shame. My speechlessness was an eloquent confession of my blunder. Was there any penance I might make? It was unwise to ask him. It should suggest itself to me. But his unfailing kindness had already forgiven me and he himself suggested the penance. 'So go again tomorrow at the same hour and tell her your mistake, and take up reading Hindi hymns with her instead of French.' M. D.

Gandhiji's remark:—(Censored and passed, though not without considerable hesitation) M. K. G.

Smt. Anasuyabehn's school for the children of mill labourers deserves the highest credit for regular takli spinning. Two months ago when Gandhiji visited the school, the children were seen spinning on their taklis and recently also they were found doing the same. Remarkable progress, it seems, has been made in the matter. This was the reason for Gandhiji's second visit : Takli spinning certainly goes on there regularly, but as Anasuyabehn wants to organise in future a big public competition in takli spinning, she arranged on the 18th (18-11-1925) a competition among only her students by way of a rehearsal, so to say. Sri Vallabhbhai Patel (then the President) provided the Municipal Hall for seating the children and Sri Rajagopalachariar was invited as the Chief Guest.

It was obviously impossible for these children of the poor untouchable 'mill hands' to have sat in such a grand Hall ever before. And could they have a previous experience of electric fans moving over their heads ? But they felt no charm either for the imposing Municipal Hall or the ceiling fans or even for the distinguished guest, Sri Rajagopalachariar. They were so absorbed in spinning, that they seemed to be rooted to the spot on which they were sitting and bent upon not letting a second of their time slip by in the slightest lethargy—so as to make the roll of their yarn on takli too big for their palms. I have seen many persons spinning on taklis, have even taught some others, and claim to be fairly proficient myself. But these children shattered my pride completely. They were given for spinning cotton that was received as a charitable gift. Its quality reminded one of the cows given away in charity formerly by Nachiketa's father.<sup>1</sup> I, for one,

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1. The father performed a sacrifice and as an essential rite was giving away some of his cows to Brahmins, but taking shrewd care to see the the animals given away were worthless. To correct the father Nachiketa asked him, "And to whom are you going to give me away in charity?"—not once but many times, till the doting father was compelled to give an answer, "To Yama ( God of Death )", he said in wrath. Nachiketa took him at his word, went away to Yama's abode, fasted for 3 days to gain admittance and thus gained Yama's grace. Yama then taught him the secret of overcoming Death.



would shrink from spinning that cotton. But those children were sitting with the determination to produce yarn from even the worst quality cotton, if it was given to them. Their taklis danced in their hands like small whirling tops and the Hall's big area added to the beauty of the scene. At the sight of the thick rolls on their takli, I thought they might have brought their taklis with some yarn wound on them, but Smt. Anasuyabehn told me, "They all came with their taklis completely empty and all this big output is three quarters of an hour's work, while the competition period is one hour."

But now let me come to the result. There are some takli spinners indeed, in Madras, who spin upto 200 yards an hour. But on this side ( Gujarat ) I have not seen anybody spinning more than 100 yards. I myself have been able to reach to only 73 yards of 30 counts. I have not tried to spin thicker yarn and I cannot claim, I can spin even thick yarn or bad cotton. Taking all this into consideration the result of the yarn spun by these children should be termed 'excellent'.

222 children had entered the competition. 168 out of them spun 'good' yarn, some even 'excellent', the yarn of 15 children was 'bad', that of 21—of 30 to 40 yards in length—'fairly good', 12 children returned their taklis totally empty, ( being kids they must have yawned away or played away their time ), and the reels of 6 were extremely tangled. All these children were 7-to-12 years old and only 3 or 4 might be 14 or 15. 76 of them belonged to the pre-primary and first standards. All those who spun bad yarn or made it tangled were among those 76 and were 7 to 10 in age.

But a more detailed analysis should be given of those who spun 'good' yarn. The average output of 28 of them who were 'first class' spinners, was 115 yards of 13 counts. Their highest output was 138 yards of 15 counts and the lowest 101 yards of 15 counts. Those 3 or 4 who spun 'excellent' yarn turned out 117 yards of 17 counts, 101 yards of 19 counts, 107 yards of 27 counts and 121 yards of 18 counts. I give the second class to those 38 who spun from 75 to 100 yards. The highest out-

put in it was 96 yards and the lowest 76. There were 52 who belonged to the third class as they spun from 50 to 75 yards. The highest output in this class was 74 yards and the lowest 52. There was the fourth class also, of those who spun 40 to 50 yards, and they were 36 in number.

Who would not feel delighted at this result? How nice, if those who donate cotton to these children gave a better quality? With better cotton these children can give still better results. Even the heap of the yarn spun from gifted cotton upto now has grown so big, that Smt. Anasuyabehn hopes to provide them clothes made from the yarn spun by themselves. Sri Rajagopalachariar did not know of these results—they were found out afterwards, but the very sight of little children absorbed in spinning fascinated him and the children fully deserved the praises he gave them :

"I will take a leaf out of your book and start this experiment in my province. You are not common children, going to school merely to learn the three R's. You are the adopted children of Gandhiji and, being such excellent spinners, are soldiers of the Gandhian army. You must be proud to belong to his flag and become worthy of your Father. It would be such a fine thing, if managers of other schools—specially municipal and national schools—started this experiment from your example."

24-11-1925

Gandhiji talked with the Ashram boys and girls when it was found that their behaviour was unclean. He told them : "Don't bring about my death." Written confessions, therefore, began to be given to Gandhiji. The first came from... Kis-horelalbhai, Narharibhai, myself and others opposed their reading in public, saying that we were not morally fit enough to hear them and that their publication might also harm many of those who made them, as well as those who heard them. So Gandhiji sang the glory of confessions, but did not publish them.



Balkoba ( brother of Vinobaji ) preached a sermon on the next day. It smacked to me of spiritual pride and I gave my reply.

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कह कबीर यह उनमनि रहनी

सो परगट कर गई ।

दुख सुख से कोई परे परमपद

तेही पद रहा समाई ।

साधो सहज समाधि भली ॥

There's a life that transcends all

Delights and sorrows grim;

This secret tale I now reveal

This way of bliss supreme :

To flow in the normal course of life

But ever absorbed in Him.

Kabir.<sup>1</sup>

Physical pleasure and pain go together and form a pair. Where there is pleasure there is pain and *vice versa*. But there is a state of spiritual evolution in man in which there is an uninterrupted joy that transcends these physical contacts of pain and pleasure and that is the state of supreme bliss. If it is dark and we light a lamp, the darkness disappears, but when that light is put out, it becomes dark again. But if we light in the heart a light that is inextinguishable, one would cease to care either for light or darkness outside<sup>2</sup>. The same with the revolving wheel of life and death. Some daring souls

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1. One of the most famous mediaeval saints of North India who lived the low class life of an ordinary weaver, but was 'ever absorbed in Him', and went beyond creeds and popular superstitions. His life and hymns show what a healthy climate for intercommunal unity these mediaeval saints were building.

2. In "In the Vision of God" Swami Ramdas relates an incident in which an eye-surgeon volunteered in his presence to remove the blindness of an ascetic but the latter refused, saying, "When it is light within, why put out that light to see the light outside?"

that give up everything they call their own go beyond life and death. But 'this is a secret tale', i. e., it is life lived in the seclusion of the self within, a life of silent endeavour, but one that has been brought out by Kabir. There is a similar expression in English : 'For, nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest ; neither anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad.' ( All this perhaps refers to Gandhiji's vain attempt to keep his fast a secret—translator. )

Before Gandhiji resolved to go on a fast, Maganlalbhai ( nephew and manager of his Ashram ) had tied him down to the promise that the fast was to last for 7 days and not more.

It began on Tuesday.<sup>1</sup>

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Vallabhbhai was requested to attend the annual celebration of the national school at Ode, but as he was not in a position to go and as some others had already gone there on similar occasions, the organisers discovered me in their search. The function was held on 28.11.1925.

Ode with its population of 6000 is one of the 12 towns, the Patidars of which are regarded as the high-born among them. When five years ago national high school was started there, the people were very enthusiastic. But the climate of depression all around spread there also and the institution today is on the brink of a breakdown. As the population of the township is large and as it was supported by many local funds, the school fared fairly well for 2 or 3 years. But afterwards the people's vigilance began to slacken and dishonesty crept in. Interests on funds ceased to be given to the school and even the voluntary *prorata* contributions imposed by caste-guilds on marriage celebrations, which used to be—and are still-collected, remained in the custody of some rich man or some one else. All the same owing to the Gujarat Vidyapith's grant of  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd the expenses, i. e., of 1100 rupees, and the income from the students' fees

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1. Gandhiji fasted for a week from 24. 11. 1925 to 30. 11. 1925 in expiation of some sexual uncleanness of the Ashram boys and girls. See Appendix V.



amounting to 2200 rupees, the school is not running in a debt. Why should the public care to contribute anything, when the Vidyapith gives the grant ?

But people have grown averse to the continuance of even this school for which they pay nothing. Some say, the defection of the Charotar Kelavani Mandal's<sup>1</sup> school at Anand vitiated the atmosphere of Ode, some others, that the people in general never really wanted a national school—it was conducted against their will—and so they want to close it now.

I had a very pleasant time with the school children. I could see that they had the power of independent thinking and fearlessness. I, therefore, met their parents and the town leaders and asked them, "Why do you want to put children of such mettle to the commonplace government school (—a private but government-recognized school)?" And this was the reply: "You people coming from outside are happy with the education of the children, but not we. Our point is this: 'The number of students who passed their final examination of the secondary course, be it of the Bombay University (i. e. the Government's) or of the Gujarat Vidyapith, was formerly larger than of those who pass now. The town's educational standard has thus gone down and that we don't like.' The words "of the Gujarat Vidyapith" were added only out of courtesy or tact. In my talks with them lasting for 3 or 4 hours, the above was their chief argument. Some other inhabitant of that same township rebutted this plea. He said that those students of the national school, who join a government school later on, show better results than the older regular students of that school and that only last year 6 of the former class got very high marks, but could not prosecute their studies further for want of money. There was another argument also. "The students themselves don't want the school to continue." I myself answered this

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1. Some public-spirited men collected a fund for spreading education in the Kaira District and started a school at Anand. This school had again become a government-recognized school. It is managed by Charotar Kelavani Mandal ( Association for spreading education in Kaira District ).

argument. "75% do want it." Then they said: "The people in general don't want the school and we only voice their feelings as their representatives." That would mean as if they, the representatives, wanted it to continue ! Even those who advanced this argument recognized how ridiculous it was. An old gentleman, who had shown great enthusiasm as a non-co-operator in 1921, secured recently the honour he coveted, namely, that of shaking hands with H. E. the Governor Saheb ! And how ? By discarding his white Gandhi cap made from Khadi, sending for stockings and wearing the old red Patidar turban. He seems to consider children as at par with landed property. He said : "Why do we spend money on our farms ? In order that they may yield us more money in return. Why do we feed our cows ? So that they may give us milk. The same with our children." A teacher then asked him, "Will you not care to see whether your son gains in character or not ?" "But does that bring us hard cash ?" he asked in reply. "So money is your God," came back the answer. "Not mine only, everybody's," he rejoined; "can this school go on without money ? And how long will Mahatma Gandhiji's work go on if there was no money to support him ?"

The strange thing about all this is the fact that nobody cares a fig for principles. Nobody wants to remember the cause that led to the non-co-operation movement and national education as a part of it. It seems as if self-respect does not mean anything to us now. We have ceased to be sensitive on that point altogether.

After seeing this tragedy—I mean the talk with these leaders—I saw the dramatic pieces performed by the students. The actors were 'adorned' with the detestable, dirty, and borrowed foreign clothes and crowds of people had rushed to see the performances. How was it possible for those 'bhadraloks' to let the untouchables come in ? Were it fitting for me, I would have made the condition that I would take part in the function only if untouchables were allowed entry in it. But I felt I was not fit enough for that strictness. Not only, therefore,



did I see the children's dramatic pieces, but staged a drama myself—by delivering a speech. I use the word 'drama', because I knew that the people had gathered to see two plays—one by myself and the other by the students. They wanted me also to act a play, because they did not want to give a single thought to what I said. I knew that my speech was only a cry in the wilderness.

They do not want the ( national ) school and hence its teachers also. They would not feel at ease, unless these really harmless teachers, who spin and wear Khadi and repeatedly exhort the students to wear it, are thrown out, so that the dry roots of Khadi which still linger embedded in the earth are uprooted altogether !

I met with quite a number of 'wise men' who indulged in idle talks and regretfully wondered why slackness and depression should have overcome the land. 'Could absence of any galvanizing activity be their cause ?' they asked. Could they not be due to Gandhiji's emphasis solely on the spinning wheel ? I told them, "Now, now ! Gandhiji really does not put all his emphasis only on the spinning wheel. He does want to highlight other items of work, if they can be implemented. But who, I ask you, stops you from forming arbitration boards and desisting from resorting to law courts ( one of the items of the non-co-operation of 1921 ) ? Does anybody come in your way, if you want to wash out the sin of untouchability ? Do as much as you can, by all means; but do at least this—the thing that the weakest of us can do, spinning for an hour and wearing Khadi. His humble request is only that." But it was useless to argue with them. Where the will itself is lacking, no argument can avail. The fact is that a handful of rich men want their sons to get the Matriculation Certificate and for that reason they want to stop the boys of the common classes from attending the national school, even though the latter never care to be matriculates, want only to get some rudimentary education and then to look after their farms. After their children leave the National School, the rich can send them to the

Matriculation Examination, but their fear that the education imparted in the national school incapacitates their children from properly preparing for that examination is deep-rooted.

If, in trying to find out the causes for the desire to close the national school, I find only this selfish interest of the rich as the prime cause and if some people feel hurt at this view, I can only beg their forgiveness. But my conscience attests that I am not unjust to anybody in holding that view.

The leaders were telling me that the national school was opened because the students wanted it and they wanted to close it because the students themselves wanted its closure now. Let us hope that if the students cannot succeed in stopping the school from being closed, they will at least refuse to join the local government school.

The following is the province-wise table of the members and sympathizers of the All India Spinners Association who joined it before 30th November, 1925.

	Members A class	Members B class	Sympathizers
1. Ajmer	5	0	0
2. Andhra	158	4	0
3. Assam	36	0	0
4. Bihar	62	8	0
5. Bengal	103	1	4
6. Berar	1	0	0
7. Bombay	46	2	2
8. Burma	3	2	1
9. C. P. (Hindi)	16	2	0
10. C. P. (Marathi)	34	11	2
11. Delhi	11	0	0
12. Gujarat	224	70	1
13. Karnatak	64	4	2
14. Kerala	20	1	0
15. Maharashtra	103	10	2



	Members A class	Members B class	Sympathizers
16. Punjab	13	0	1
17. Sindh	29	10	1
18. Tamil Nad	145	12	1
19. United Provinces	54	3	0
20. Utkal	17	0	0
	1,144	140	17

In compliance with the pressing request of many propagandists of the spinning wheel, the yarn for 'A' class membership was reduced from 2000 to 1000 yards per month and for 'B' class it was kept to only 2000 yards per year. Taking this reduction into consideration, it cannot at all be said that the figures given above show any remarkable progress. Had we possessed accurate figures of the quantity of yarn spun and the number of those who spun it, in pursuance of the old spinning franchise, we would have been able to make a comparison between the past and the present positions. But, at least at present, we do not have such detailed figures. If every province prepares them, we can easily know how much we have progressed or regressed. Since the number of those who bought yarn in order to become members of the Congress was negligible in Gujarat, its figures of its past work may provide some guidance. Out of the 2500 enrolled members, at least 266 had subscribed the full quota of self-spun yarn, i. e., 20,000 yards per year and 314,12,000 yards. Out of even the 1273 who contributed less than 12,000 yards, the majority contributed more than 2000 yards. What may have happened to this large number of last year's spinners? From whom else but them can the Spinners' Association hope for subscription of yarn? May it be that most of them have ceased to spin after the resolution of the Patna All India Congress Committee? If that is true, they have interpreted the Patna Resolution in just the opposite sense. But there is no reason to believe with certainty that many of them have ceased to spin. I myself

know so many who spin but have not joined the All India Spinners' Association. The reason for not joining the Association is simply indolence. It does not become Gujarat of all provinces to let the progress slacken, the more the conditions are made easier.

Many student gatherings, even conferences, are held these days. But hardly any of them may have noted an incident in the student world which deserves to be remembered always—the seven days' fast which Gandhiji took for raising the standard of character among his students, whom he loves as his very life. The fast is valuable not only for those students for whom he fasted, but for the whole student world. And as much for the world of teachers as for that of students. Its greatness and value will be better appreciated from the expressions which Gandhiji gave vent to when he ended the fast on the morning of the 1st December, 1925. Calling the children to his side he said the following slowly, in a tone choking with emotion :

“Not that I had not to suffer during the past seven days of fasting. But it appears to me that I would have had to go through even greater pain, if I had not undergone the suffering of the fast. After very deep reflection and self-analysis, it seems to me that the fast was not a mistake. It is possible that even if his action is wrong, the man, who is passionately attached to all that he does, cannot see his error. But why should I fail to detect mine ? Only that man would be blind to his failing who has a craze for something, is self-opinionated, and has never seen the truth. But I believe I am free from these faults. I am crazy, but for one thing only. Every moment of my life, I feel an urge to reach God even by leaping, if possible, over the separating distance. How I wish I were completely contained in God, i. e., in Truth ! It has been my constant endeavour to keep myself far away from sinfulness.

“Why do I entertain such high hopes from the Ashram ? Because I wandered from place to place and found my refuge here. Because we have decided not to yield to defeatism, even



if the whole world has lost hope And because I cherish the desire that this Ashram will play the same role, as Phoenix did in South Africa.

"But to get that spiritual power what is needed is purification and character. And for that the least one can do is to fast for a week. It was undertaken for purification. I may have to perform an even harder penance in future. I can save myself from it only when I run away from the world. But though born as a Vaishya I am a Shudra, a Brahman and a Kshatriya rolled into one. I cannot, therefore, think of escaping from the world. What I want to be is, as Balkoba said, a 'shant-atma' ( a person with a pacified soul ). How can that state be achieved except by purification *par excellence* ?"

[ It is best to reproduce what follows in the Gujarati Diary Sri Mahadevbhai's own article "The Latest fast" in *Young India*, d. 10-12-1925 ]

@ "Think of last Tuesday when I began my fast. Why did I take this step ? There were three ways open to me :

(1) *Punishment* : I could have followed the easy road of corporal punishment. Usually a teacher on detecting errors on the part of pupils would flatter himself with having done a good thing, if he punished them. I have been a teacher myself though my preoccupations prevent me from teaching you during these days. As a teacher I had no option but to reject this accepted method, for I know by experience it is futile and even harmful.

(2) *Indifference* : I could have left you to your fate. Not unoften does a teacher do so. "It is enough," he argues, "that the boys do their lessons tolerably well and reproduce what they are taught. Surely I am not concerned with their private behaviour. And even if I was, how am I to keep watch over them ?" This indifference could not appeal to me.

(3) The third was the method of Love. Your character is to me a sacred trust. I must, therefore, try to enter into your lives, your innermost thoughts, your desires and your impulses,

and help you to detect and eradicate error, if any. For inward cleanliness is the first thing that should be taught ; other things must follow after the first and most important lesson has gone home. I discovered irregularities amongst you. What was I to do ? Punishing you was out of the question. Being the chief among the teachers, I had to take the punishment on myself in the form of the fast which breaks today.

“I have learnt a lot during these days of quiet thinking. What have you ? Could you assure me that you will never repeat your mistake ? You may err again, but this fast will be lost on you, if you do not realise the way out of it. Truthfulness is the master-key. Do not lie under any circumstances whatsoever. Keep nothing secret, take your teachers and your elders into your confidence and make a clean breast of every thing to them. Bear ill-will to none, do not say an evil thing of any one behind his back, above all ‘to thine ownself be true,’ so that you are false to no one else. Truthful dealing even in the least little things of life is the only secret of your life.

“You must have noticed that I receive my inspiration on such occasions from the hymn ‘Vaishnavajana to tene kahiye’ ( He is the true Vaishnava )<sup>1</sup>. That hymn is enough to sustain me, even if I were to forget the Bhagawad Gita. To tell you the truth, however, there is one thing which is even simpler, but which may possibly be difficult for you to understand. But that has been my pole star all along during life’s journey—the conviction that Truth is God and untruth a denial of Him.”

It is a matter of satisfaction to note that at last, after so many years, the unjust excise tax on cotton goods produced in India has been annulled. But the Government was only compelled to bow to the inevitable and deserves no thanks. The credit for destroying that sin goes all to the labourers of cotton mills in Bombay. We were naturally reminded on

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1. See above pp 222.



this occasion of the ( Gujarati ) line which says that co-operation enables tiny ants to kill even a poisonous cobra.<sup>1</sup> With none to lead them and no organised association at their back, these labourers can hardly be called stronger than ants. And yet as they remained firm in their improvised unity, they succeeded in taking the life of that venomous cobra, the excise duty. Their capitalist employers will have to change their view about them from this victory. If God inspires the mill-owners with wisdom, they will take a lesson from this incident and make their relationship with their labourers sweeter and more honourable. Let us hope that, as a result of this success, the labourers will realise their inherent strength, increase their power of organization, and earn for themselves their rightful place in society,

From *Young India* d. 3. 12. 1925

@ *A Striking Record* : Elsewhere the reader will find a fairly detailed account of the progress of Khaddar in the Tamil province during the last one year. The original report as received from the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Khadi Board is a lengthier document which space has not permitted us to publish in full. As it is, the extracts published are long enough and the careful reader will be amply rewarded for the trouble in perusing them. There are things in it, which every other province which has an organisation for Khaddar work would do well to copy. Much need not be said to commend the report to the attention of every lover of Khadi; even the unsympathetic critic will find enough in the report to revise his opinion.

That it has been possible and necessary to open 16 more sale and production depots this year in the province is evidence of the permanency that Khaddar is gradually gaining inspite of heavy odds. The strictly business-like manner in which the work has been carried on in Tamil Nadu speaks volumes of the genesis and steadfastness of those numerous self-effacing workers who have been playing the humble role of Khadi

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१ 'कीडी काला नागनो प्राण जले आ पेर ।'

producers and hawkers and have chosen to bury themselves in village work at great personal sacrifice. It was never to be imagined that Khaddar would make any appreciable headway without some educated men and women giving themselves up heart and soul to it. The reader may rest assured that the picture in the report is not over-drawn.

No one who reads the report carefully will fail to be struck by the significant fact that there has been an increasing demand for Khaddar in the province during the period covered by the report. Diminution or increase in the number of white caps or white upper clothes to be seen in the streets in big cities and in railway trains is a deceptive criterion which should be dismissed from the mind, if the position is to be judged correctly. The movement is surely and steadily penetrating into the villages, where it is gaining a strong foot-hold. The present outward disappearance of Khaddar from the cities means nothing. The movement is now going through the second stage which is characterized mainly by silent and intensive work that does not obtrude itself upon the attention of the public and, therefore, yields better and even quicker results. The village hawking experiment was found to show the good results it has and, with the precaution and supervision mentioned in the report, greater results may be expected from it.

That no stone is left unturned by the energetic workers in T. N. may be seen from the fact that the Board has passed a resolution calling upon every Taluq to collect a sum of Rs. 1,000 to be invested in Khadi work in the particular Taluq where the money is collected. As an incentive the Board promises to help on their part provided that substantial initiative is taken by the people of the Taluq. The plan has already begun to operate in some areas and the Board is confident of further response.

There are provinces which are running a close race with Tamil Nadu. The present report furnishes business details which one would like to see observed elsewhere.



@ *Spinning as Famine Relief* : A definite era may be said to have begun of spinning being used as an effective form of famine relief. Atrai and other centres in Bengal were pioneers in the direction. A successful experiment is now going on in the flood areas of Utkal also, though not on the scale one would wish it to be. Reports have now been received of a very successful experiment going on in Utkal, a famine area in Coimbatore District. Here is a telling account of operation and results :

“All the spinning in the area operates as a relief to the famine-stricken and especially to the labouring classes who exist in fairly large numbers in the villages in the area and are experiencing great difficulties. Even when they do find cooly work, it is poorly remunerated, as in Papanpalayam where a full day's work fetches for a man only 4 annas and for a woman only 2 annas and even less. Under such conditions spinning has been a much-needed relief and has offered a substantial addition to the other incomes of the spinning families.

The Convocation of the Gujarat Vidyapith, which took place on 5.12. 1925, was a quiet affair. The Registrar's report says that the graduates who took their degrees were 50 this year—lesser by three than last year. 47 out of them had applied for getting their degrees. The Gujarat Vidyapith has so far produced 215 graduates including those of this year. While there were two colleges affiliated to it last year, not only there is only one now, as the national college in Bombay has been closed, but the number of students of the college in Ahmedabad has gone down also. There were, under the Gujarat Vidyapith, 75 schools with 8,266 students last year, but there are 56 with 5,329 now. The figures thus do not show progress and the Vidyapith seems to be losing ground to some extent.

All the same one need not take that pessimistic view. Some kind of progress can never be shown in figures. There were two girl graduates among those who passed this year. The Gujarat Puratatwa Mandir ( Research Institute ) has kept up

its silent progress. Pandit Dharmanand Kosambiji wrote 2 new books this year : 'Samaadhimarg' ( the road to spiritual ecstasy and "Bauddha Sanghno Parichaya" ( An essay on the Sangha of Buddhism ). The Text Book Committee of the Vidyapith got 6 new books published. The Vidyapith has given to Gujarat this year 3 graduates as selfless workers and has produced 2 or 3 others of such a high calibre as can easily take the place of the present professors. The Vidyapith's monthly magazine "Sabarmati" goes on in a splendid manner and contains excellent articles written largely by the students. Hardly any monthly magazine issued by Government Colleges can stand comparison with 'Sabarmati' in its articles' high standard in taste and profound thinking. It is perhaps the only one of its kind published in the people's language besides. For his article on Kant's ethics Sri Gopaldas Patel secures the Taramati Medal this year. This article is remarkable in many respects. Not only does it contain an excellent elucidation of Kant's ethics, but gives also a very easily understood essence of his high philosophy. There have been many graduates in philosophy of the Bombay University, but hardly any has till now served his mother language with his original contribution in philosophy or with even the gist of a Western philosopher's thoughts. I, therefore, congratulate Sri Gopaldas on this achievement and request him to continue his efforts in the same direction. This is the good result that has come out from the Gujarat Vidyapith's policy of imparting education through the mother tongue and the consequent habit of thinking and writing in it. I hope, Gopaldas' example will be followed and Gujarat enriched with such high literature in other subjects.

If we look at the progress from this angle, there is no reason for anybody to feel disappointed. And yet there are people who care to see nothing but figures and allow their minds to be dejected by the atmosphere of depression around them. Bearing these pessimists in mind, in his capacity as the Chancellor Gandhiji gave the following speech which was read out to the gathering.



“I congratulate the winners of prizes and the new graduates. I wish them long life and a future career that will adorn them and the country.

“Let us not lose ourselves in the darkness of despair that has spread all around us. Let us not look up at the sky outside for the sight of the warming rays of hope, but go into ourselves in search of them. Those students who have confidence in their own selves, who have given up fear, who are absorbed in doing their duties and are convinced that performance of duty is itself the key to the attainment of rights, will refuse to be scared by the darkness that surrounds them, know that it is but a passing cloud and feel sure that light will soon emerge.

“Non-co-operation is not dead. Co-operation and non-co-operation have been going on since creation. Who has ever been able to do away with the existence of the duals of truth and untruth, of peace and restlessness? If it is true that truth deserves our co-operation, non-co-operation with evil is equally true *ipso facto*. If patriotism deserves our praise, treachery we are bound to condemn. If the attitude of co-operation with freedom is a must for us, non-co-operation with slavery is the natural counterpart. Hence, be there only one national school or many, be there only one such student or many, among the ways and means to win freedom, a high place is certain to be assigned in the future history of India to our national schools.

“These are adventures to cut a new path. The critic will discern many defects in them. Some of them we can see ourselves. Efforts to remove them all are constantly going on. I know that there are flaws in our organisation, that the managers as well as the professors of the Vidyapith are not perfect. But we are alert about our shortcomings and all feasible remedies will be taken to remove them.

“Students! Keep up patience. Regard yourselves as the true servants of India for winning Swaraj. Don't do a single

thing, speak a single word, think a single thought, that is unbecoming of a national servant. May God bless you."

When he went to Dholka ( d. 6. 12. 1925 ), he had not the strength to walk even a furlong; but Dholka had been given hopes four or five times earlier and they could not be fulfilled Gandhiji, therefore, resolved to go there at any cost this time and went. Sri Dahyabhai has managed to keep the flame ( of enthusiasm ) burning, though it is only a streak. Trying to keep the embers of hope alive even under the ashes of despair, he kept on inviting Gandhiji to Dholka. There were some opponents also who had written anonymous letters to Gandhiji complaining that Dahyabhai was calling him against the people's wishes, that not a single rupee was collected for the Deshbandhu Fund, that Khadi was nowhere in Dholka, etc. But Dahyabhai appeased even the mischief-makers, met everybody, collected as many as 1600 rupees for the Deshbandhu Fund, got as much Khadi bought as possible, invited many representatives of village committees, held a women's meeting attended by hosts of women and saw that perfect quiet was kept at Gandhiji's meeting: It would be so fine if such perfect quiet was maintained at Gandhiji's meetings, not only when he is ill, but also when he is all right ! Here is a short extract from his speech :

"The position of the spinning wheel and Khadi here cannot be called satisfactory. I wonder what language I should use to convince you that in Khadi propaganda lies the salvation of the wretchedly poor in India. It pains me to see you wearing foreign or mill made clothes. In your lack of enthusiasm for Khadi I see only your ignorance about the real situation in India and, what is still more painful to me, your want of patriotism. The man who buys even one yard of Khadi puts at least 4 or 5 annas into the poor man's pocket. I wish, you learnt this easily understandable duty of wearing Khadi. Just as it is necessary for you to wear Khadi, so it is your duty to spin as a sacrifice for the national cause. I can understand the people here not plying the spinning wheel for the sake of



earning money, because they are better off. But will you not spend half an hour from your spare time to help the poor and do a religious duty? I need not explain my point over and over again to men of understanding like you.

"If Hindus still cherish hatred and contempt for untouchables, they must throw out that dirt from their heart. I have not the least doubt that it is a sin to regard a human being as unfit for our touch, just because he is born in a particular community. Religion teaches us mercy, not hatred and contempt. It is the bad thoughts within us that should be really treated as untouchables and driven out. But we should feel nothing but love for our brothers and sisters of the depressed classes.

"May God inspire you with wisdom and with an urge to serve the country."

There is one common feature in all his speeches after the fast. He could have, if he had wished, dictated long speeches and got them read, but he did not think it necessary. He thinks that all that required to be said has been said, all arguments have been given in full, and now he should, without any more fuss, simply point out the diseases that affected the country, suggest his infallible remedies for them and do even these things in a spirit of complete detachment. But on our part the more we understand the intense desire underlying this detached spirit, the better for us.

The national school in Bombay is passing through many vicissitudes. The teachers regard it their religious duty to impart national education and are putting up a brave fight there. Speaking (d. 8. 12. 1925) at the annual celebration of that school, Gandhiji refrained from asking either the students or their parents not to let down the school, but talked only of the self-sacrifice of the teachers and of the duty of students. This is what he said :

"I feel grateful to God for His grace in giving me the strength to be present here on this occasion. This is one of

the few national schools still functioning. I congratulate the teachers on their working in the school in a spirit of self-sacrifice. Only just now I was told that the teachers have made a voluntary cut of 15% in their salaries. And the Principal does not take even an honorarium. All this is gratifying and excellent. I hope, the public will take interest in this institution and encourage it.

“And you, students, should realize that you have joined this school to learn the lessons of national service. Give, therefore, a large part of what you learn to the nation. That is the purpose of teaching you the science of the spinning wheel. You, who spin here daily, are doing so for the sake of the country, for the sake of the poor in it, and are thus learning, right from your boyhood, the lesson of selfless service. Never give up the spinning wheel.

“I am tempted to make one comment. There is nothing wrong if a school like this performs dramatic pieces, but the dress material should be Khadi and no other. There is no need whatever to decorate the dress with gold threads etc. All the actors wore Khadi only in the “Tilak National School for Girls.” The teachers here also should have done the same. We, who have plunged ourselves in national service and have faith in Khadi, must not give it up even on such an occasion. Art lies not in apparel, but in proficiency in acting. If that were present, people would be so absorbed in seeing your acting, that they would hardly cast a glance at your dress. I hope, you will use nothing but Khadi on a similar occasion in future. Discernment and insistence in small things teach us to be careful about things that really matter in life.

“I wish the children long life. May they be true servants of the country in future. I wish prosperity and happiness to this school.”

Everybody must be knowing from Press reports that now, after going to Wardha, Gandhiji has regained all his lost weight. He is staying here at the branch of the Satyagrahashram which is under the management of Sri Vinoba ( Sri Vinoba



Bhave, the famous Bhoodan leader ). The peace that pervades the Ashram can better be imagined than described. It is far from the town and at that outskirts of the Ashram stands Sri Jamnalalji as a sentinel on guard. No one is allowed to meet Gandhiji unless he has a specific business. Farms and fallow plains stretch for miles and miles all around. The only disturbance in the stillness here is the hoot of passing trains and that too is heard occasionally.

But all this is outer quietude. For inner peace, to say that there is nothing here to disturb it is not enough. There is everything here that helps to deepen it. What else can the Ashramites absorbed in their appointed tasks provide us with, if not the soul's serenity? Right from 4 a. m. in the early morning to 8.30 p. m., everyone is busy in his work. Gandhiji spoke only once at the prayer meeting, and that too because he himself wanted it and not because he was requested to say something. I have not yet been able to know the reason, but it seems that hymns have been dropped from the prayers here. Instead, however, of saying that they have been dropped, I should rather say they are not sung, because Tukaram and Ramdas ( Maharashtra's mediaeval saints ) are frequently quoted by Vinoba even in his ordinary chats. In their place, Vinoba selects from his inexhaustible store of knowledge some sentence or part of it or mantra and hangs his whole sermon upon it. I prefer to share that *prasadi* ( material form of the 'grace' of a deity or a holy man ) with the readers rather than have it all to myself.

Readers of 'Navajivan' are not alone in their doubt as to how the Gita's message could be non-violence, when Lord Krishna repeatedly asks Arjuna to fight his opponents in the battlefield. Vinoba has to face quite a lot of such questioners also. One may even say that in every circle where Gita is studied some people are content to put this single question to satisfy their curiosity for spiritual knowledge, as if it was the only question that deserved an explanation in the study of the Gita. I propose to give a substance of the answer which Vinoba

gives to this question. Gandhiji's article on the same matter must be fresh in the memory of all. It is not wrong to say that Vinoba expounded in detail the essence of that article.

He began with showing how deeply he loved the Gita :

“Hardly a day passes in my life, when I do not think of the Gita or not refer to it in my talk. It is no exaggeration to say that this practice of studying the Gita is going on for the last 12 years. There are the Upanishads, of course. Not that you can gain less from them, but they are helpful to only a few. There are also the Vedas, but they too are mystic in character. The Vedas are ‘purifiers of the elite in learning’ ( विशिष्टपावन ), whereas Gita purifies the world ( विश्वपावनी ). My effort to study it, to understand and assimilate it, is so intense that I may as well say I am more conversant with the Gita than with any individual, with even any friend. When, therefore, I was asked whether the Gita propounds violence or non-violence, I was ready with the answer. I love this question so much, that if I have to repeat my answer a hundred times I should not feel tired.

“The Gitaji (ji—a suffix of respect ) is the milk extracted from the cows called the Upanishads and as these preach nothing else than non-violence, the message of the Gita can only be that and no other. This logical inference immediately answers this question. But let us examine the Gita scientifically also.

“There are many who have doubts on this message of the Gita, because the outer dress the Gita wears is misleading. A glance on the surface discloses the Gita in a warrior's outfit and, naturally, people jump to the conclusion that the object of the Gita is to preach violent warfare. But in reality Gitaji is like the coconut fruit. Can anybody who has never seen a broken coconut ever imagine from its hard surface that it contains a tasteful soft fruit and softer water within? The shell of the coconut is so tough, that it takes a long time to merely break it. The same is the case with Gitaji. Gitaji is like Ramachandraji who, as both Valmiki ( in Sanskrit ) and



Tulsidas ( in Hindi ) say, was hard as adamant on the outside, but soft as the flower 'shirisha' in the heart. And they say this not only for His banishment of pregnant Sitaji into a forest but for his actions all through life.

"So let us break through the outer shell of Gitaji and see the kernel within. What is the thing that worries Arjuna? What is the problem with which he approaches the Lord for solution? Let us think of that. Has the question of the propriety or otherwise of violence arisen in his mind? His only trouble is :

न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे ॥ Gita I-31.

"I see that nothing good will come from killing my dear ones in battle." And they were so dear ! Vyasji, whose maxim is, 'Brevity is the soul of wit,' takes 5 or 6 stanzas over them ! 'How can we be happy, O Krishna after killing beloved preceptors, grandsires, sons, maternal uncles, fathers and brothers of wives, and all such dearest souls ?' he wonders. He had till then killed quite a number of men and was even at that time in no mood to spare his enemies as according to him they deserved to be killed. All that he was affected with was his infatuation for dear ones and the thought of having to kill *them* and not his enemies. That was what made his heart sink and limbs grow listless.

"It is true that he speaks of the evils of war, says that war destroys the clan and from it comes the destruction of the *dharma*s of the clan as well as the fall of women. But all that is only sophistry, — like that of a judge who condemns the whole system of capital punishment, just because his own son stands on the dock before him for murder. All through his former life the judge had never felt any qualms about sentencing persons to death. Only when the son's case comes up before him, he becomes crazy and bursts out, "This very system of 'murder for murder' is bad. It does no good to anybody. It does not deter others from committing murders etc." I am reminded of

the very popular plea advanced by those who have a crazy fondness for their own opinions. Everyone of them says, "Mahatma Gandhi holds this same view." True, the very occasion of having to send his son to the scaffold is likely to awaken the judge—father's conscience to the iniquity of the system of capital punishment. But even this case does not apply at least to Arjuna. He does not utter a single word to show that he refuses to fight, because, he thinks, violence by itself is an evil, because war by itself is a heinous crime.

"And how does Sri Krishna react? He does not answer Arjuna's argument about war at all. He drops completely any discussion on it. He never says that war is a duty, even if the clan and its *dharma* and the chastity of women are all destroyed. Brushing all that aside he simply says : प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे । ( Gita-II-11 ) (Thou speakest fallacious words of wisdom.)<sup>1</sup>

Through that one word ( प्रज्ञावादान् ) Sri Krishna says in effect : "Though it is fundamentally true that war and violence are bad, you are quoting a right principle for a wrong end that of justifying and increasing your crazy weakness for your relatives." By calling Arjuna's plea 'prajnavad' the Lord has not only upheld the intrinsic truth of the wickedness of war and violence but also pointed out Arjun's misuse of the principle.

Were Arjun disgusted with the war because he had really grown averse to all violent warfare as such, the Lord would have answered his arguments against war, if He wanted Arjuna to fight even such a violent war. But the Lord tells him only :

अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।

( The world will for ever recount the story of thy disgrace — Gita II—34 )

Arjuna could have said in reply, "I don't care if I am disgraced, but I am not going to have anything to do with violence."

1. Most of the translations are reproduced from Sri Mahadevbhai's book:

'The Gita According To Gandhi'



The Lord characterizes Arjuna's mood as that of 'बलैर्घ्य' (impotence), of क्षुद्रं हृदयदीर्घत्यम् (miserable faint-heartedness) (Gita II—3). Were Arjuna really fired with the spirit of non-violence, he would have exultantly said. "No. It is from the spirit of bravery, strength of heart and awakened consciousness, that I say I am not going to fight this war (or any other)." Instead of this bold avowal he refers only to his dear ones, asks only one question, 'How can I kill Bhishma and Drona whom I revere?' Had Arjuna discarded violence under the conviction that non-violence alone tends to one's spiritual welfare, there would have been no need left for the Lord to give all this long exposition of the Gita. But Arjuna's desire to give up violence might be either 'rajasik' (—'passionate' or full of desire or attachment) or 'tamasik' (—'born of ignorance, laziness, or heedlessness'), but it was certainly not 'sattwic' ('stainless, light-giving, and healing,' and 'one that binds one with the bonds of happiness and knowledge'). The task ordained for him was to fight the war. If, overwhelmed by craze or delusion, he wished to give up this appointed duty, his backing out was nothing but 'tamasik'.

मोहात् तस्य परित्यागः तामसः परिकीर्तितः ।

(Giving up one's allotted dharma out of infatuation is nothing but 'tamasik'. Gita XVIII-7). If his proposed withdrawal from the war was under the fear that it would cause distress, it was 'rajasik,' i. e., due to passionate attachment (for relatives). The Gita says :

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात् त्यजेत् ।

स कृत्वा राजस त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥

(He who abandons action for fear of pain and straining effort does 'rajasik' abandonment and will not gain the good fruit of abandonment. Gita—XVIII—8)

"The Lord wanted to save Arjuna from both these unhealthy kinds of abandonment ('rajasik' and 'tamasik'). The whole question in the Gita is centralized round 'moha' (crazy attachment) and its 'nivarana' (removal of the attachment). In the

beginning of the discourse Arjuna describes the state of his mind thus :

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः  
पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसंमूढचेताः ।

( My being is paralysed by faint-heartedness; my mind discerns not duty; hence I ask Thee. Gita—II—7 ).

“After giving the whole discourse in order to remove this confusion in Arjuna’s mind as regards what his *dharma* was, the Lord asks him :

कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते घनंजय ।

“Has thy delusion, born of ignorance, been destroyed, O Dhananjaya ?” ( Arjuna. Gita XVIII-72 ) and Arjuna gives the explicit answer :

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

( XVIII—73 )

( Thanks to Thy grace, O Achyuta (=Infallible ) my delusion is destroyed; I have gained right knowledge ).

“Looking at the Gita in this scientific manner, it is very clear that the whole question hinges round nothing but Arjuna’s craze. The question of the propriety or otherwise of fighting or of violence or non-violence as a principle is not the point at all.

“It is besides a law of logic that the point which is not answered by the opposing debator is accepted by him as correct. By calling it प्रज्ञावाद the Lord does accept Arjuna’s argument about the series of evils that flow from war--though it does not behave Arjuna to put forth that plea. But let alone the use of that significant word. The logical principle already given shows that the Lord accepts Arjuna’s argument about the many evils that follow a war since he does not answer that argument.

Here is another proof. In the 8th Chapter there is :

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युद्ध च ।

( Gita VIII-7 )



“What does this line mean? The Lord says : ‘Therefore, at all times remember me and fight.’ Does this mean that He asks Arjuna to go on fighting the battle of Kurukshetra eternally? What the Lord has done here is to give to Arjuna a deduction from the general rule. He gives in the preceding shloka. He says in effect : ‘He gains liberation who remembers Me in the last moments of his life. But this remembrance is not possible unless a man remembers Me all his life through. In order, therefore, to gain liberation, remember Me at all times.’

“The Lord has put the word ‘and fight’ just after this commandment. To take the word ‘fight’ in its literal physical sense here, is to misinterpret the Lord’s intention altogether. ‘Remember me and go on fighting against the forces of evil at all times’ seems to be the only right meaning that one can put from the use of the words ‘at all times.’

“Further, if we try to find out what the Lord says in straight and clear terms, we shall see that He preaches non-violence over and over again. The Lord asks all the three, a *jnyani* ( a man of spiritual wisdom ), a *bhakta* ( a devotee ), and a *karmayogi* ( a man of godly action ) to practise this one and the same virtue, non-violence. Not only is there the distinct mention of ‘*ahimsa*’ ( non-violence ) in His enumeration of divine qualities ( XVI-2 ), but many other virtues which mean non-violence are also stated there. For instance, ‘*akrodha*’ ( freedom from anger ), ‘*shanti*’ ( serenity ), ‘*bhuteshu daya*’ ( pity for all creatures ), ‘*maardava*’ ( softness of heart ), ‘*hri*’ ( modesty ). One of the virtues which the Lord recounts as those of Kshatriya ( the warrior caste ) is युद्धे चाप्यदलायनम् । ( — refusal to run away from the battlefield ). The Lord here also speaks of a brave stand in the battlefield, not of killing or destroying the enemy. ( Gita XVIII—43 ). In XVII also, when the Lord shows what ‘*tapa*’ ( penance, austerity, etc. ) means, He calls non-violence as ‘physical, harmless utterance’ ( which also means non-violence ) as vocal, and ‘serenity and

gentleness' ( non-violence again ) as mental 'tapa.' And when He describes the qualities of his most beloved devotee, He begins with :

**अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानाम् ।**

( who has ill-will towards none. XII—13 ) and even near its end He says :

**समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।**

( Who is the same to foe and friend, who regards alike respect and disrespect. XII—18 ). The Lord has thus only repeated His love for non-violence.

“And finally, let us see what the commentators have got to say, not because their interpretations alone are authentic and unquestionable, but because we thereby know that they also support our interpretation. Shankara's Commentary clearly states that the sentence 'fight, therefore, O Arjuna !' ( तस्माद् युद्धयस्व भारत । II-18 ) is not a 'vidhi' but an 'anuvaada'. "Vidhi" means a law to be followed as an express mandate, while 'anuvaada' means permission. When a man, before whom a situation has arisen, asks the question, "May I do such and such a thing ?" and when the answer given is, "Yes, you may do that," the answer is permission ( anujnya or anuvaada ) not mandate ( ajnya or vidhi ). Even in II-38, where the words are, "Join the battle" ( युद्धाय युज्यस्व ), Srimad ( a title of respect ) Shankaracharya says that it is 'an advice on a particular occasion' ( प्रासंगिक शिक्षा ) not a 'vidhi'.

“It is besides worth bearing in mind that out of the numerous other commentators of the Gita, not one deduces the meaning of violence from it.

“It is indeed true that a man's interpretation of a text is coloured by his attitude. But according to the scientific standard of examining a text both from its outer and inner aspects no other message except that of non-violence comes out from the Gita.”



The next morning I had the privilege of listening to an equally profound discourse I invite the readers to share that also. It had for its subject 'प्रायश्चित्त' (repentance or some action showing it ).

Referring to the line :

पापेऽहं पापकर्मिऽहं पापात्मा पापसंभवः । ( Pandava-Gita-I )

Sri. Vinoba said :

“While on the one hand the line means, ‘I am a sinner, I commit sin, I am the soul of sin, I am born of sin,’ there is on the other hand the Great Affirmation : इहं ब्रह्मास्मि ( I am Brahma ). Both of them are true and both applicable to man. The first expression refers to his जीव ( jiva-the Indweller hidden under the outer coverings of body, mind, sins, sinful attitude, ego etc.) aspect and the second to his शिव ( Shiva ) aspect ( the immanent as well as the transcendent Reality that man essentially is ). And that person gains the goal of human life, who is able to forge an unbroken chain between his ‘jiva’ and ‘Shiva’ aspects. Just as in Geometry if there are two points it is possible to draw a straight line, so a man can draw his straight line in the form of the path of liberation by joining these two extremities of his jiva and Shiva aspects.

“For that attainment, it is necessary to clearly understand the spirit underlying the sentences, ‘I am a sinner etc.’ and to chalk out a plan for oneself to wash off his sin or sins.

“Sins can be washed out by ‘prayaschitta.’ This word ‘prayaschitta’ has been very well explained in ‘Manusmriti’ ( Manu, perhaps the first codifier in the world, gave to India ‘Manusmriti’—Manu’s code of conduct ). In his narration of the characteristics of ‘prayaschitta,’ he mentions two ‘ख्यापन’ and ‘अनुत्तापन’ ( feeling of pain in repentance ) as the foremost. ‘ख्यापन’ means declaration i. e. giving publicity to one’s sin instead of keeping it a closed secret. But ‘declaration’ before whom ? Before God ? But He is omniscient and so the Witness of all the sins of the world. What is there to disclose before

Him? And how can one openly confess one's sin before others?

"There are two attitudes among us with regard to the quality of persons preached. The first impels a wise man to give his discourse or spiritual advice according to the deserts of the listener s), the second to give it मेघधारावत् i. e., to one and all, just as rain falls everywhere without any distinction. Open confession also may be looked at from such two points of view. When Bapu ( Mahatma Gandhi was affectionately called Bapu-Father by millions ) started writing his autobiography, somebody told me, "But Bapu will write down all the events of his past life, good and bad. What is the good of giving out to the world stories of one's sins?" I saw the propriety of this question, but immediately the answer came to me: "Bapu is writing his autobiography with the attitude of 'the shower of rain.'" Just as the questions, 'Where I should fall, to what extent should I soak the ground etc.', do not strike the rain when it falls, so the confessions appearing in such autobiographies are made before the whole world. Rishis laid it down that while mantras like the *Gayatri* must be given only to those who have acquired fitness for chanting it, those like *Ramnam* can be given to everyone and they did give them to all. As for myself, if I ask someone to observe *brahmacharya* ( continence in thought, word, and deed ) and if he makes a bad use of my advice, I would not mind. I would not first see whether the man before whom I preach *brahmacharya* is fit enough for the advice.

"Hence, though our penance through a confession can be performed in two ways—i. e., before a deserving few or the public at large. But how is the former way possible for me, when I myself am not fit enough to judge whether the other party is fit or not to listen to my confession? One thing however is definitely worth considering here. Good actions ( like confessions ) also can be performed hypocritically—specially where there is publicity involved in them. Our mind is the



judge about our practice of truth and no hypocritical action can deceive the mind<sup>1</sup> in this matter, but there can be hypocrisy in public penitence. Somebody may here argue, 'If there is hypocrisy in it, it can be due only to ignorance, and never to true spiritual perception.' Hypocrisy (=contradiction between one's goal and actual way of living) is the engine (engine-driver) of the train carrying evil qualities and the guard sitting in the last carriage is 'ignorance.' It is ignorance that sustains hypocrisy. But hypocrisy cannot be exonerated, simply because it is due to ignorance—just as in law ignorance is no excuse and does not save the person from punishment, or as a child ignorant of the consequence of his action, goes to a well, falls in it, and dies. In penitence also there is that element of truth which saves *ख्यापन* (publicity of the confession) from the possibility of hypocrisy.

"Hence the only right course is confession and that in the open manner of *ख्यापन* (declaration). But as we are not able to judge properly the fitness or otherwise of the party before whom we make our confession—in fact, we ourselves do not possess the fitness or the right to judge on other's fitness—we should confess our sins before our respective 'Gods.' The parents are the child's God, the teacher is the student's, and the Guru the disciple's. Hence the child-cum student should make his or her confession before the parents, the teacher, or the Guru. But Bapu regards society as his God and so he has got to make his confession before the whole society. There are people who take certain idols as their Gods and confess their sins before them. That confession also is quite in order. In short, one should confess before whatever form he regards, worships, and serves as his God."

13-12-1925

जन्मना जायते शूद्रः संस्काराद् द्विज उच्यते ।

Explaining this line Vinoba said : 'Everyman is born a Shudra

1. The sense in these Gujarati sentences is not clear. I have given my own interpretation.

( the lowest of the four varnas ) and then becomes *dwija* (—twice born ) owing to his *sanskaras* ( impressions and attitudes that enlighten and reform him ). That means that a man remains the same Shudra as he was at his birth, if he is not moulded by good 'sanskaras.'

14-12-1925

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।<sup>1</sup>

तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कोन्तेय ! युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥ ( II-37 )

In explanation of this verse Vinoba said :

"The Lord's whole discourse is based upon this verse. The Lord has shown in it the beneficial effect of acting according to dharma, no matter whether the result is defeat or victory. No truly religious action fails to bear a good fruit (मही—the goal fixed ). The same idea is contained in,

न हि कत्याणकृत् कश्चिद् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ।

( No well-doer, O loved one, meets with a sad end. Gita VI-40).

In his eulogy of the greatness of 'Vishwarupa-darshan' (—The Vision of the Cosmos ), the author of the Jnyaneshwari (—dissertation of the Gita by Jnyaneshwar, a 12 th century poet-saint of Maharashtra ) has shown one special trait of the Vision. As a child's eyes are filled up and tired at the sight of numerous pictures in a museum, so Arjuna's eyes were dazzled and exhausted at the brilliance of the Lord's Cosmic Form and he had to close them. All the same the Cosmic Vision continued to be seen even after the eyes were tired and closed. That is the greatness and glory of the Cosmic Vision. Whether you open or shut your divine eye, the sight of the Cosmic Vision will persist. The Lord's *darshan* ( sight ) is also of a similar kind.

"The same idea is behind our belief that one gets liberation in either case, whether you concentrate your mind on the

1 The verse literally means :

If you are killed, you will attain Heaven. If you win, you will enjoy the earth. Hence, O Arjuna ( son of Kunti ) get up with the resolve to fight. Gita II—37.



Supreme Soul in friendly love or inimical hate. Arjuna, Prahlad, and Vibhishana loved the Lord and Kansa, Hiranyakashipu, and Ravana hated Him as their enemy<sup>1</sup>, but the Lord granted liberation to both these friends and foes. Whether you just touch a piece of iron and a philosopher's stone together, or throw the former violently against the latter the result is the same—the piece of iron turns into gold. This liberation too is like the philosopher's stone.

Nearly the same is the case with dharmic action. If we win through it, we gain the earth ( i. e. attain the life's goal ) and if we cannot, we go to heaven. ( Heaven is not a permanent, or in a sense even a superior, abode according to Hindu thought. See the footnote on page 305 )

1. 'Let us take one example of dharmic action--cow-protection. The cow has been called in the Vedas '*aghanya*', i. e., one that must not be killed. Not only that. It must not be even beaten. Perhaps nothing is extolled in the Vedas as highly as the cow. It has been called an image of the Supreme God. All the Gods, it is said, live in the body of the cow, who is the Divine Mother. She has been given many such names as '*dhenu*', '*go*', '*goutama*'. The word '*go*' carries many sacred ideas. Among the many spots indicated as excellent for *dhyana* ( meditation ) and *abhyasa* ( spiritual practices )—like some quiet spot on a high mountain or a lovely bank of a river—the cow shed is mentioned as equally congenial. That means the cow-shed was kept perfectly clean—not unclean as at present. Could the rishies have put the cow-shed at par with a charming bank of a river, unless it possessed some very wonderful elevating qualities ? In short, the cow must have been treated and tended with wonderful respect and care in those days of old. If we too worship the cow as our Mother,

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1. Prahlad, was the son of Hiranyakashipu, the Lord's enemy. In his Man-lion Form, the Lord killed him to save Prahlad. Kansa, Lord Krishna's uncle, had usurped the throne and kept His parents in jail. He was, therefore, killed. Ravana was Lord Rama's enemy, but his brother Vibhisshana condemned Ravana for abducting Sitaji, Lord Rama's spouse, and joined the Lord's army.

as the meeting place of all Gods and serve her well and truly, there is bound to be 'mahi' (attainment of our spiritual goal) for us. But if we fall short in the performance of that supreme adoration, we still have the blessings of 'swarga' (heaven) in the form of bumper crops, prosperity, plenty of milk and curds.

2. "Now take 'Gangasnana' (a bath in the Ganga). Ganga has been traditionally the purifier of sinners. As Ganga issues from the feet of Lord Vishnu, another name given to Ganga is "The feet of the Lord." There are countless places of pilgrimage dotted along her banks. Half the history of 'Aryavarta' (the land of the Aryas i. e. Northern India) is woven round her banks. If one has his bath in the Ganga with the living consciousness of all this greatness, he can have 'mahi', i. e., liberation and there is no doubt that even a fallen soul would be redeemed. But if one cannot invoke such depth of devotion, fails in his attempt to do so, early rising from bed and a dip in the Ganga does give him a vitality, a power of endurance, a coolness of mind against suffering that can be termed 'swarga' (heaven).

3. "Let us take a third example, the worship of the Sun. This is how the glory of the Sun is sung :

ध्येयः सदा सवितृमण्डलमध्यवर्ती नारायणःसरसिजासन संनिविष्टः ।

केयूरवान्मकरकुण्डलवान्किरीटी हारी हिरण्यवपुर्धृतशंखहस्तः ॥

( The Lord Narayana should be always meditated upon who is at the centre of the disk of the Sun, whose face is like a lotus, who is in his sitting posture, who wears an armlet, has earrings of the shape of an alligator, who wears a crown and a necklace, who has a body as shining as gold and has a conch in his hand ).

"If the Soul that is at the heart of the Sun is worshipped daily, the attainment of the goal is a natural consequence. If the goal is not reached, you at least gain heaven if, for worshipping the Sun, you get up early in the morning everyday, have



your toilette and purify your body, and bow to the Sun with the words “*सिन्धाय नमः*” ( Bow to the Sun ), ‘*अग्नये नमः*’ ( Bow to the Divine Fire ).

4. “Then take Bapu’s fast. He stated, “If I have erred in taking the step, I alone, and none else, shall have to suffer. And if any good is to accrue from my fast, the gain will go to all.” I would like to put it another way : In that dharmic action, even if the result is defeat, the attainment of heaven is a certainty, if it is victory there is the ‘earth’ i. e. attainment of the goal of life.<sup>1</sup>

5. “Now let us turn to the observance of the dharma of non-violence. If it is practised with the knowledge of its real essence and so as a holy principle, you gain not only Swaraj ( political self-government ) but ‘swarajya’ ( rule of the Self over the being ) i. e. Moksha ( Liberation ). But even if non-violence is practised as only a matter of policy, at least Swaraj is a certainty.

“Such is the beauty and greatness of the observance of dharma. It does us good both ways, whether we succeed or fail. But God is above even dharma. As regards *bhakti* ( devotion ) to Him, the result is one and the same, whether you meet with defeat or success in your devotion, and that is *moksha*. The same is not the case with dharma. If you perform your dharma in its right spirit, you attain *moksha*. But if you observe it only physically, i. e., if you fail to perform dharma perfectly, you can’t have *moksha* but you gain only heaven. As regards ‘*artha*’ ( gaining some material object like money, power, fame etc. ), if you succeed in your attempt, you do get some material gain, but if you fail, only harm, and no good, comes. In the matter of ‘*kama*’ ( longings ) it does you

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1. According to the Gita even after going to heaven as the result of one’s good deeds, the soul of that man has to descend to the earth ( when the merit won by good deeds is exhausted ) and then strive further for complete liberation ( Gita VI, 40 to 47 ). Not heaven, but the complete liberation from birth and death and the resulting peace is the final goal according to Hinduism.

only harm, whether you succeed or fail. If I succeed, I become a very image of a Rakshasa ( Devil ) and if I fail, I am possessed with anger and the consequent unhealthy reactions therefrom ( Gita II-62, 63 ). But in the *sadhana* ( spiritual effort ) for *moksha* ( liberation ) even defeat results in nothing but '*moksha*', because '*moksha*' is God, is attainment of God.<sup>1</sup>

15-12-1925

In his article 'The Poet and the Charkha',<sup>2</sup> Gandhiji had referred to the Poet Rabindranath as Sir Rabindranath Tagore. A correspondent asked for an explanation for the use of the title. Gandhiji's reply :

@ "The use of 'Sir' for the Poet was deliberate. It was done for the sake of precision and correctness. The Poet never renounced the title, he asked to be relieved of it ( in protest against the Rowlatt Act and the Punjab reign of terror ). The Government did not relieve him."<sup>3</sup>

There was a letter from one Sri Jangbahadur Singh, asking for Gandhiji's views on '*varnashram*' ( the system of four castes and four stages of life ) and *karma* ( destiny based on past deeds ). Gandhiji's answer :

@ Precedents are good to illustrate facts. They cannot prove them. Never mind the original meaning. *Varna* is the law of heredity and transmission of qualities from previous incarnation.

"The high and low doctrine is a human manifestation. I deny that any member of the body is inferior to any other.

"We preserve correct parentage."<sup>4</sup>

1. Reference to the 4 kinds of '*purushartha*' ( पुरुषार्थ ) i. e. strenuous efforts which man makes : धर्म, अर्थ, काम and मोक्ष ( *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha* ).

2. The article appeared in "Young India" on 5. 11. 1925 and was Gandhiji's reply to the Poet's article, "The Cult of the Charkha", in "The Modern Review" of September, 1925.

3. Vide *infra* pp. 321.

4. Gandhiji changed his views on intercaste marriages considerably in later life. He would give his blessings not even to 'high' inter-caste marriages but only to those, where one of the two—either the bride or the bridegroom—was 'an untouchable'.



"I do not believe in the incident about Rama having chopped off the head of a Shudra practising *tapasya*."

In answer to the question why Gandhiji should serve the ( Shudra ) low-born even though he believed in karma and 'punarjanma' ( re-incarnation ). Gandhiji wrote :

@ "Because hereditary traits, whether physical or moral, can be and should be removed and changed. Dirty Brahmins should not be permitted to eat with clean ones. Two wrongs do not make a right.

"Regulations as to inter-dining and inter-marriages are not eternal. They are conveniences for the evolution of man and subject to constant change and adjustment."

A letter from Badoda ( Rabindranath Tagore's elder brother ) :<sup>1</sup>

@ "I have at last got beyond which one wants nothing else."

Gandhiji's reply :

@ "You have sent me joyful news indeed. May that which you have got remain an everlasting treasure with you."

Vinoba's Discourse :

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं; रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

( "When a man starves his senses, the objects of those senses disappear from him but not the yearning for them; the yearning too departs when he beholds the Supreme"—Gita II-59 )

"Before Gandhiji gave his explanation of this verse, I gave that same explanation to Gopalrao. 'Rasavarjam' (=not the yearning) is an indeclinable and the sentence ends there. A man's physical abstention from the enjoyment of sense-objects is certainly beneficial to him to the extent that the sense-objects 'return' ( i. e. are not enjoyed ). But his 'rasa' ( yearn-

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1. Vide supra, pp 31.

ing or interest ) for them remains. Even this 'rasa' fades away, when he beholds the Supreme. The verse speaks of 'the yearning too' ( रसोऽप्यस्य ) not of 'but the yearning' ( रसस्त्वस्य ). If the sense in the second sentence was distinct from, and not in addition to, that in the first, the word 'तु' ( tu=but ) would have been used and not अपि ( api=too, also, even ) as had been really done. One Upanishad goes even further and clearly states 'fasting' as one means of knowing the Divine :

तमेतं वेदानुवचनेन ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति यज्ञेन दानेन तपसाऽवशनेन ।

( By the study of the Vedas, by sacrifice, by deeds of charity, by austerity, and by abstinence from food, Brahmanas desire to know Him ( God. Brihad-Upanishad IV—4—22 ).

16. 12. 1925

Vinoba's Sermon :

"Among the four, the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra, the Brahmana has the pride of learning, the Kshatriya of power, and the Vaishya of wealth. The Shudra has not a single thing to be proud of. God, therefore, dwells in the house of the Shudra. The Brahmana's scholarship, the Kshatriya's strength or power, and the Vaishya's wealth, prevent each of them from reaching God's abode, because they believe in the power that their accomplishments bestow on them. The Shudra, however, has no strength to boast of and so he can cry out to God, "God is the strength of the helpless and weak."

"Separation from God and union with Him are both equally high states. Poets have compared Laxman's ( Rama's brother, who went with Him to the exile ) state of union with Bharata's ( another brother who was asked by Rama to look after the kingdom in His absence ) state of separation, but they have wondered which of these two states should be regarded as worthier and more blissful. What makes even separation a state of supreme bliss is devotion and faith



Bharata's faith in Rama's spiritual presence by his side and in the certainty of his physical return to Ayodhya never dimmed during all the 14 years of Rama's exile. If we too cultivate such unwavering devotion and faith, God is quite at hand for us."

17. 12. 1925

Bhaktas ( devotees of God ) have been classified into 4 types in the Gita ( VII-16 )—arta ( the afflicted ), jijnyasu ( the spiritual seeker ), artharthi ( the material seeker ), and jnyani ( the enlightened ). Why should the Lord have characterised all of them as 'estimable' ( उदाराः ) ? ( The manuscript diary contains this question, but not its answer ).

18. 12. 1925

Vinoba said :

"In today's talk on untouchability Gandhiji said, "Hinduism is going to be destroyed." This thought pained me deeply. During his tour in Cutch also he said somewhere, "It is my daily prayer to God to destroy Hinduism ( if it means untouchability ). When I read that sentence also, I could not help shedding tears. But the reason for my grief was not that the idea was wrong. It is essentially correct. Why, even today somebody put the question, "Can we drink water from an untouchable's hand? Can we eat food cooked by him?" I feel one should make it a point to eat the food cooked by a Shudra, because he has the prior right to serve society."

"That is real education which you imbibe automatically. I have greater faith in the Shastra ( Scriptural lore ) than even in my experience. I have committed most of the scriptural lore to memory and whenever a doubt assails me, I get a clarification from it. It is a valid statement which the Upanishad makes when it says, "Whatever has not been said here, may not have been said anywhere else and it is not true that what has been said elsewhere is not included in this." When education was the subject of our discussion, it struck me that about that subject I should have a peep into the Shastra. And then

I was reminded of the story of Satyakama Jabali.<sup>1</sup> That story in the Upanishad is really worth reading, as it shows how truthfulness, whatever the parents' caste, made the speaker a Brahmana and how Satyakama learned the truth from cows and oxen and thus acquired the lustre that the realization of Brahma brings. The Guru himself gave him no knowledge. All that Satyakama did was to tend 1000 cows, and from that service, spiritual wisdom sprouted in him spontaneously. That is true education, and true knowledge as well, which comes out from within."

19-12-1925

In the explanation of the verse :

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

( "Even a man of knowledge acts according to his nature, all creatures follow their nature; what then will constraint avail ?" Gita III—33 ).

Vinoba said :

"Like the verse विषया विनिवर्तन्ते... ( Gita II—59. Vide supra page 307 ), this verse also is sadly misinterpreted. When all along, from the second to the eighteenth canto, the Lord preaches the control of the senses, does He forbid it only in this verse ? No. In the very next verse He says :

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषो व्यवस्थितौ ।

तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

( "Each sense has its settled likes and dislikes towards its

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1- When Satyakama (=lover of truth ) was seized with the wish to learn, he asked his mother Jabali what his family name was, as the Guru wanted to know it. His mother said, "When you were conceived, I was serving as a maid-servant in many homes and I don't know the name of your father's family. But tell your Guru, you are Satyakama, son of mother Jabali". Satyakama narrated all this faithfully to the Guru who was so pleased with his truthfulness that he said Satyakama was a Brahmana, because a Brahmana speaks the truth. The Guru then accepted him.



objects; man should not come under the sway of these, for they are his besetters."—Gita, III—34 )

"That means likes and dislikes throw obstacles in the spiritual path of the man. His alone is the right spiritual effort, who resists these natural tendencies of likes and dislikes. One has, therefore, got to keep one's nature under control. But self-restraint is ( or has become ) the very nature of a man of spiritual wisdom. He will, therefore, act only according to that nature of his. What is the sense in stopping him from such natural behaviour ? That is the meaning of the verse.

"Jnyandev interprets this verse quite differently. I doubt if any other commentator has explained it in the way he does. He says, "प्रकृति यान्ति भूतानि" ( beings follow their nature ) means every creature ( after death ) is absorbed in the five fundamental constituents.<sup>1</sup> How can any nigraha ( restraint ) succeed there ?" He means by 'nigraha' the shackles of one's craze for this fleeting, illusory world ( संसार ), to hold on to which man exerts desperately. Why all that hectic fever ( of attachment to the world ) when in the end every creature as such is going to be dissolved into the five constituents ? That is the special meaning Jnyaneshwar has drawn out, as in his time also there must be people misusing this verse."

I have already referred to the peace that prevails here and the atmosphere that creates it. I wish to draw here a more detailed picture of that atmosphere. But I can properly do so only to the extent to which I have absorbed that peace within my being, just as unless there is a Shakespeare in you, you cannot appreciate Shakespeare well enough and cannot be a sufficiently revealing critic of his art.

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1. In Hinduism ( including Jainism, Buddhism and other offshoots ) there are 5 ( "great beings" ) fundamental constituents, of which the earth and all living creatures are formed. They are space ( akasha ), air ( vayu ), light or fire ( agni ), water ( jala ), and earth ( prithvi ). Each succeeding constituent is grosser than the preceding, but without all the five, no matter or life is possible on this earth. They are not element in the chemical sense, but are basic components of life and matter here.

And that atmosphere means Vinoba and his family—the Ashram. Who does not know Vinoba in Gujarat—at least among those in it who are ‘Navajivan’ fans? When he went to jail during the Nagpur Satyagraha,<sup>1</sup> an article giving a detailed picture of Vinoba was published in ‘Navajivan’ on 24-6-1923. When five years ago a branch of the Satyagrahashram was opened in Wardha at the instance of Sri Jamnalalji, it was Vinoba<sup>2</sup> who was chosen by Gandhiji to be the latest manager there. And during these recent years of his stay there, Vinoba has brought the Ashram to such a high level, that Gandhiji got there the deep serenity in the longing for which he goes to the Sabarmati Ashram but which we, the Sabarmati Ashramites, often fail to provide him with.

And is there any wonder if Gandhiji finds such deep peace there? In the foundation of the Ashram lie Jamnalalji’s devotion to God and his inflexible faith in truth and non-violence and its present manager ( Vinoba ) is a single-minded devotee of truth and non-violence and a real karmayogi ( a man of Godly acts ) in addition. Vinoba did not meet with those difficulties which Gandhiji encountered in the establishment of the Sabarmati Satyagrahashram. For instance, though it meant some relaxation of his high principles, Gandhiji had to admit some persons who could not fully live up to them. His has always been the work of a reformer and an experimenter. He wanted to repair even broken vessels, so to say, and make them fit for use. But Vinoba had no need at all to go in for experiments. So he always sifted out the chaff

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1. The Government had banned, the passage of processions with the National Flag through European quarters in Nagpur in 1923. Civil resisters disobeyed the order and went to jail. Ultimately the Government allowed a big procession with National Flags to pass through that quarter and released the Satyagrahis.

2. It was Vinoba again on whom Gandhiji conferred the privilege of being the first Satyagrahi in the Individual Satyagraha campaign in 1940, because Gandhiji wanted his best Satyagrahi colleague to start that campaign. And Vinobaji has vindicated Gandhiji’s choice by his thought and work later on.



and kept with him only those young men who could fit in with his austere observance of principles. Consequently, that Ashram has become today a closely-knit family of 15 men and 1 woman and has been giving lessons in the silent discharge of duty to the people around. As the Sabarmati Ashram is a big colony of inmates of varied tastes and capacities, discussions about the propriety of getting up early at 4 a. m. can arise there. But here it has become quite a natural habit with the inmates to get up at that early hour. And they immerse themselves in their respective duties with the same effortless ease, with which they get up at 4 a. m. for prayers. They themselves cook the food they eat and that food is simplicity itself—without any condiment, without even turmeric. They clean their latrines also. For 6 to 7 hours they either card, spin, and weave or do some seasonal farming. They have the same simple meal in the evening, as in the morning, and it is taken before sunset. Then the evening prayers at 7 p. m. and lights off at 8. 30, so completely that the total darkness thereafter is relieved only by the light that nature provides through its stars or the moon, because they sleep with all doors wide open. But in addition to this 7 hours' physical work, there is provision for imparting knowledge also. But that knowledge is like the one that Satyakama Jabali gained in the natural course of his work, i. e., it is the one which Vinoba, who believes in education imbibed spontaneously that way, gives to the inmates. One hour is devoted to Jnyaneshwari, an Upanishad, or like, and one hour to general knowledge which includes all that is really worth knowing. Thus the whole period from early morning to 8. 30 p. m. is so closely filled up that it would be difficult for the Devil to find an idle hand, so that He can tempt him to commit a sin. In order to be one who has washed off sin by spiritual wisdom (ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषः) Vinoba is striving and making others strive to master the mantra (potent charm) of कर्मनिर्धूतकल्मषः (one who has washed off sin by means of right action). And in order to prevent the entry of egotism, hypocrisy, affected manners, or tedium

in this spirit of active devotion to work, during the morning and evening prayer gatherings, Vinoba expounds, and thus provokes reflection upon, some holy *mantra* or Sanskrit verse. He draws out it at will from his memory's storehouse where it is so well stocked, that every *mantra* or Sanskrit verse is at his beck and call. For instance, this is what he once said : "We don't know the process by which a thought produces its effect. But the fact is that it springs up from our unknown depths like a seed buried underground. If we go to bed with some good thought in mind, we find it sprouted in the morning on waking up. The Lord has said in the Gita that He should be remembered even at the last moment of one's life on this very ground. His remembrance also is certain to produce its good effect. And is not sleep but death in a small way ?"

But as I go on writing this, it strikes me more clearly that I am unable to give a perfect idea of the atmosphere of industry that prevails in the Ashram, as I do not write from real self-experience. I have not actually taken a share in its activities owing to my yielding, not exactly to idleness but certainly, to the call of many other duties. It is the women in our party who joined not only in the work of grinding corn but also in that of cleaning latrines, that have really felt the delight that work enthusiastically done gives. And I am writing all this without that experience of delight.

Many people used to attend the prayers at the Ashram—specially because of Gandhiji's presence. He took rest for the first four or five days, but afterwards he allowed the people to put questions to him, if they wanted. Questions of all kinds—good, bad and indifferent—were then asked, but nearly all from outsiders. On Saturday ( 19-12-1925 ) these questions took a queer turn. Somebody asked : "Is telling a lie even in a joke allowable ? For instance, if two persons talk in a language which a third does not understand and if one of the first two tells him, 'We are talking in Greek. You won't understand us' ?" Gandhiji told him in reply, "The propriety of that answer



depends upon whether the third person takes the answer seriously or by way of a joke." Not content with so much, the same gentleman put several other questions on the same line. That tickled some another gentleman to put the question: "Should we or should we not tell a lie, if it saves a man's life?"

"We shouldn't even then," replied Gandhiji.

The questioner then framed the same question in another way such as, "Should we then speak out the truth and let the man die?"—not in an inquiring spirit but in order to corner Gandhiji. But Gandhiji quietly replied: "We are not bound to speak out the truth. We can keep mum." That impelled the gentleman to go into a still greater detail in his questionings. Gandhiji was hurt and said, "I am not going to answer this question, as it betrays an itch for argument for its own sake. God never puts a man who walks in His fear to such a test, and if He ever does, it is my faith that He shows him at the same time the way out. It does us no good to indulge in such sophistry in place of keeping to the truth in matters quite at hand. Spinning such webs of fancy is violence against truth also." etc.

20-12-1925

In a letter to Mrs. Naidu ( President of the coming Congress ) Gandhiji wrote the following which I reproduce from memory :

@ "This is my last letter to you before we meet at Cawnpore, where a mere woman displaces a mere man. May your words come out of purity, may you adorn Indian womanhood and Hinduism. May your words be a balm to the Hindu-Muslim wound. You are too great to notice the childish display of unchivalrous incivility. ( Some people were going to stage a demonstration against her—'a mere woman's election as the President. )"

Gandhiji called all the inmates and asked them :

"Do you all enjoy spinning ? Many in the Sabarmati Ashram don't find it very interesting. I mean by 'interest', the relish

sleep or food has for us. We loose our spirits, if we have to go without food or sleep. I mean that kind of interest."

This definition demanded a very high degree of interest and questions were put in the order of the youngest first. All the same though there was none whatsoever who did not find spinning interesting, not one of them claimed that his interest in spinning satisfied Gandhiji's standard. One of the students said, "There is no doubt that one ought to find spinning enjoyable to that degree, but I say so theoretically. My practice lags behind." Another boy of the same age said, "I don't bother about interest or want of it in spinning. I regard it as my duty and do it, and I cannot say of any of my other activities that it gives me as much peace, as much pacification of anger etc., as spinning does." Vinoba put the whole thing in a nutshell, when he said, "The old Ashramites love spinning and the new entrants do it in order to observe a healthy rule; and at the back of the minds of both the groups there is the faith that without spinning the country's uplift is impossible."

Let me give an instance or to show that, not only is there this faith, but there is no dry, mechanical observance of the Ashram rules also. The boy who talked of spinning as a performance of his duty was entrusted with the work of preparing Gandhiji's food etc. He did that work with a timeliness and care that would extort admiration from anybody. But that apart. One day he taught me a lesson in non-possession.<sup>1</sup> "I can understand Bapu taking the exact quantity of ounces of milk. But where is the necessity of having a glass measure for it? It adds to one's possessions and, being made of glass, when it breaks it causes both pain and loss of money. Can we not in its place get out brass vessel for milk engraved with gradations showing every 4 ounces' increase?" It provoked me to a smile, but to cut the matter short I said, "True". "He persisted how-

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1. The inmates of Gandhiji's Ashrams were required to take 11 vows of good conduct, one of which was 'non possession', meaning, the lessening of one's wants to the barest minimum and possessing thereby as few things as possible.



ever : "If you observe only this vow of non-possession well enough, you come to observe all the other ten in the natural course. All these vows are so inter-connected, that in honestly trying to stick to one, you cannot help sticking to all others." "But is the 'brahmacharya' ( continence ) vow indispensable for observing that of 'non-possession' ?" I asked. "It is" he rejoined. "Brahmacharya is inevitable for one who wants to keep the non-possession vow. That man has but to keep aloof from acts which his body should not perform. He would observe non-possession even in thought and give up every bad thought." The answer effectively silenced me.

Vinoba sent a young boy for a talk with me, saying, "You will have much to learn from Mahadevbhai. Join him in his stroll and put whatever questions you like." It was I who put him questions all along our walk and knew much from him, but he would not open his lips for a question. At last, I told him, "But you didn't ask me any thing ?" He laughed and said, "What is there to ask ? I may like to know the goings on in the Sabarmati Ashram, but that I learn from the periodical "Ashram Samachar" ( "Ashram News" ). I read "Navajivan" regularly and have picked up enough English to be able to read "Young India." Now what else can I have to ask you about ?" So this boy was content with the knowledge he had ( ज्ञानतृप्त ) ! Most of them can recite the whole Gitaji from memory and throughout day-time we hear many of them chanting its verses, while they may be busily engaged in their work. Even the little virgin who joined the Ashram not long ago has learnt seven cantos by heart. She laughed at me for going to Jamnalalji's house for my meals and said, "So you go there because you don't like our jowari rotis ( thick unleavened jowari bread ) and spiceless pulse ?" But I have not been able to understand only one thing in all this admirable atmosphere of non-possession here.

Even the earthen jars filled with drinking water are not provided ! If you want it, you have to go to the well opposite and take it from there ! But this I said only to introduce a

lighter vein in a serious narrative. Let me give it a finish now with the statement that the Ashram affords an atmosphere that confers peace on a troubled soul and incites activity in a slothful mind.

21-12-1925

Vinoba took for his text the following verse :

न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।  
कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामातिनाशनम् ॥

( I desire neither kingdom nor heaven nor even liberation from the possibility of new births. All I pray for is the removal of sorrows of afflicted creatures. )

He said : “What does allaying of the pain of the sorrowful mean ? And what does the speaker mean by saying that he does not wish even moksha ( liberation from birth and death ) ? As far as I remember, Yudhishtira ( the eldest Pandava known also as Dharmaraja for his love for dharma ) is made to say this in the Mahabharata,

“In the Prahladakhyan ( the story of Prahlad ) of the Bhagawat ( gospel upholding devotion to God ) the Lord comes in the Man-Lion Form in order to save Prahlad. Everybody is frightfully scared – even gods and demons, but not the child Prahlad. He says, “नषिभेम्यहं” ( I am not afraid ). And what makes the child so fearless ? The world itself appears so terrible to him that he regards even the dreadful Man-Lion Form of God as nothing before it. And then Prahlad sings the glory of the Lord in the devotional spirit of deep compassion for the afflicted world. In that adoration there is one really wonderful verse :

प्रायेण देवमुनयः स्वविमुक्तिकामाः  
मीनं चरन्ति विजने न परार्थनिष्ठाः ।  
नैतान्विहाय कृपणान् विमुमुक्षुरेको  
नान्यं त्वदस्य शरणं भ्रमतोऽनुपश्ये ॥

( By and large gods and sages desire the liberation of themselves and, absorbed in the Absolute they observe silence in



forests. But I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving these many pitiable people. I do not see any refuge other than Thou for the soul that wanders in the world's wilderness ).

“That means, even sages desire liberation for their own-selves. They are not worried about the souls of others, but I for one don't want liberation without that of the countless 'kripanas' who live in this world. Kripanas means 'kripapatras'— ( fit objects for God's grace. This is Sri Vinobaji's interpretation of the word 'kripana' ).

There is only an apparent difference between Yudhishtira's attitude in the first verse and Prahlad's in the second. Yudhishtira wants neither earthly rule nor a place in Heaven. He is not enamoured of even *moksha* ( absolute liberation ). Only one thing he desires—the relief of the unhappiness of the sorrowful. But I interpret this word 'dukkha' (—sorrow etc. ) not as any earthly trouble ( like bad health, worldly worries, and mental agony ) but as that great spiritual affliction, ( meaning the soul's bondage which entails disconnection from the Source Divine ), from which all creatures suffer. I interpret it that way because earthly sorrows are such as cannot be averted. There is only one real remedy for them—'titiksha' ( bearing one's affliction with equanimity ).

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥

( The contacts of senses with outward objects produce joy and sorrow by their very nature. They are transient. They come and go. Bear with them, O Arjuna ! ).

The Lord has thus shown only this remedy of quiet suffering and there is no real reason for a man to feel either fascinated or grieved at these contacts.

तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः

एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

( What fascination, what grief, can there be, then, for him who sees oneness in all that exists ? )

“The fundamental sorrow which causes all other sorrows is thus ‘bandhan’ ( bondage ) and relief from that sorrow is ‘mukti’ ( liberation ). One means of attaining that liberation is ‘bhakti’ ( devotion ). In both these verses ( Yudhishtira’s and Prahlad’s ) it is devotion that is extolled. Bhakti is the means. We should be so completely interwoven with it, that no question for mukti remains for us ( as it would be the inevitable result ). Every bhakta has sung the same thing. Narsinh Mehta ( of Gujarat ) has sung :

‘हरिना जन तो मुक्ति न मागे  
मागे जन्मोजन्म अवतार रे !’

He is the Godly man who wants,  
Not ‘mukti’ but repeated births.  
That lustily, O God, he may  
Sing thy glory and always pray.

And this is what Tukaram ( of Maharashtra ) says :

न लगे मुक्ति धनसंपदा । संतसंग देई सदा ॥  
तुका म्हणे गर्भवासी । सुखे घालावें आम्हांसी ॥

Let me always be with saints,  
Wealth and worldly ease are vain,  
I will not mind if then Thou wilt  
Give me birth again and again.

All these saints have got this gem of wisdom from the first Guru, Prahlad.

प्रह्लादनारद-पराशरपुण्डरीकव्यासाम्बरीषशुक-शौनिक-भीष्मदात्म्यान् ।

हवमाङ्गदार्जुनवसिष्ठं विभीषणादीन् पुण्यानिमान्परमभागवतान्स्मरामि ॥

( I remember all the holy saints and great devotees such as Prahlad, Narad, Parashara, Pundarika, Vyasa, Ambarisha, Shuka, Shaunaka, Bhishma, Dalbhya, Rukmangada, Arjuna, Vasishtha, Vibhishana ).

“In ‘shringara’ ( erotic sentiment ) as well as in bhakti ( the sentiment of devotion ), there are the same two variations—



union and separation. Union with God is 'mukti.' Separation from Him is 'bhakti.' It is undeniable that a man's karma ( action ) is going to fructify. Results of virtuous and vicious tendencies are equally certain. Knowing that fact, we must believe that bhakti is the right kind of pursuit and that our spiritual welfare lies in doing bhakti. At the same time we must not have impatience at the thought, "How is it that I have not yet gained mukti?" Mukti can be attained only when our whole mind is concentrated upon bhakti. Explaining the meaning of action without the desire for fruit (फलाभिसंधि रहित), Shankaracharya says, "There should be no desire for any result—not even for mukti ( मोक्षेऽपि फलेऽपि च अनिच्छा ) ।"

"Hence in Udhishthira's verse, heaven and earthly rule are looked down upon, but not mukti. All that Udhishthira wants to emphasise is that one must not think of mukti, the fruit, but go on doing bhakti. And in the verse there is the underlying faith that the attainment of 'mukti' is certain through the means of bhakti."

Bapu ( Gandhiji ) got read to him the note, "Poet and the Charkha," which had appeared in the December issue of the "The Modern Review." It deeply hurt Gandhiji's feelings. After a long deliberation he wrote the following letter to Shastri Mahashaya.

@ "Dear Shastri Mahashaya,<sup>1</sup>

"I had to make my choice—to write to Gurudev ( Poet Rabindranath Tagore ) directly, or to Ramanand Babu ( Editor, "The Modern Review" ) or to you. At last, I have made my choice and I leave it to you to show this letter to Gurudev and Ramanand Babu.

"I had Ramanand Babu's article in "The Modern Review" on the charkha read out to me. I must own that it has deeply pained me. I know that he is too good wilfully to misunderstand anybody. It is my misfortune that what I thought I had

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1. Vide supra p. 306.

written<sup>1</sup> with the purest motives should be understood as being otherwise written even by men like him. I should not pardon myself if even Gurudev has so understood my article.

"I can but explain my position and ask every friend in Shantiniketan to accept my explanation. Gurudev's title Sir was not used in ignorance. I knew that he had not renounced the title, but had asked to be relieved of it. He was not so relieved. Andrews and I had a discussion over it and we both came to the conclusion that the title not having been taken away, we, Gurudev's friends, should make no fuss about it. We also felt that it would be courtesy even to make use of that title now and then. I know what poison has been emitted over these boycotts. I have, therefore, gone out of my way to describe titled personages by their titles in order to show that the use of titles was no crime. It was thus out of regard for Gurudev that I used the title. It was used so automatically that I knew I had used it, only when Mahadev drew my attention to it on receipt of Ramachandran's letter."<sup>2</sup>

As to jealousy. Let Ramanand Babu and other friends know that not one but several Bengali friends and some Gujarati friends and even others mentioned the matter in that light. Let me also add that I tried to disabuse them of the prejudice. When I discovered that the belief was fairly general in certain circles, I thought I must refer to it in the columns of "Young India."

"It surprised me to find Ramanand Babu mention the Poet's other qualifications. I take leave to say that they are not to be compared with his matchless poetry. As a reformer I should cross swords with him. But who can equal him as a poet? There are many reformers in the world today, but he is the

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1. Gandhiji wrote an article entitled "The Poet and the Charkha," In "Young India," d. 5-11-1925, in reply to the Poet's article, "The Cult of the Charkha" in "The Modern Review" of September 1925. Then Ramanand Babu adversely commented upon Gandhiji's article. This letter is Gandhiji's reply to that article.

2. Vide supra pp : 306.



only Poet outdistancing every other in the race. He is a great schoolmaster, but himself has told me his pedagogy is his plaything. To mention his other qualifications, however great they may be, side by side with his poetry is to ignore the unquestioned supremacy of his poetry. At least that is what I think.

“Lastly, pray believe me when I assure you that I wrote that article in no unloving, unfriendly, or critical spirit. I wrote it to disarm criticism and to testify that his differences with me could not possibly diminish my regard and affection for him. Do please all of you regard me as one of you, incapable of misunderstanding the poet, or his mission. I must not be deserted or misunderstood by you. Do please ask Ramanand Babu to let me have a line to say that he accepts my explanation. And will you get an assurance from the Poet that he, at least, did not misunderstand me ?

“You may share this with anyone you like.”

About ‘Vibhutiya’ (the tenth canto of the Bhagwad Gita), Vinoba said :

Arjuna asks the Lord : केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन्मया ।  
“In what different aspects am I to think of Thee, O Lord !” and the Lord recounts some of his superb manifestations. But it is not in the 10th canto only in which the Lord enumerates his ‘vibhutis’ (superb manifestations). In cantos 7, 9, and 15 also there is a description of them. As, in order to find out its smoothness, we do not pass our hand over a whole long piece of cloth but only over a small part of it, or, as we press between our fingers only a few cooked grains to find out whether the whole quantity of rice in the vessel is well cooked or not, so the Lord has given only an idea of His infinity and boundlessness by giving just a few of his ‘vibhutis’ as specimens. All these ‘vibhutis’ thus exhibit only a tiny fragment of Him. In reality, He is beyond limitations and manifestations. Just as there is in the Vedas :

एता वतोऽस्य महिमा पुरुषस्तत्परः ।

प्राधान्यतः कुरुश्रेष्ठ नास्त्यन्तो विस्तरस्य मे<sup>१</sup> ॥

But there is a difference in the 'vibhutis' given in the tenth Canto from those in the seventh. In the tenth He says, "Of deceivers I am the dice-play ( द्यूतं छलयतामस्मि ) ; I am the rod of those that punish" ( दण्डो दमयतामस्मि ) ; I am Kandarpa the God of procreation ( प्रजनश्चास्मि कंदर्पः ) । These are puzzling expressions. Can the Lord be the dice-play of cheats ( द्यूतं ) ? Or the rod of punishment ( दण्डः ) ? Or Eros ( कंदर्पः ) ? But in the seventh canto ( verse 11 ) there is : बलं बलवतां चाहं कामराग-विर्वर्जितम् ( "of the strong I am the strength divorced from lust and passion" ), while in Canto X verse 36 there is only, " I am victory, I am resolution" ( जयोऽस्मि व्यवसायोऽस्मि ). In the spirit of this all-encompassing statement in the 10th Canto the Lord should have said in the 7th Canto simply ! "I am the strong man's strength" and dropped the qualifying expression, "divorced from lust and passion." Moreover, in the same Canto and the same verse VII-11, the next line is "O Arjuna, in beings I am desire undivorced from righteousness" ( धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ). Then again, though there are all kinds of smell in the earth, in that seventh Canto he only says, "I am the sweet fragrance in the earth" ( पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्याम् ).

While, therefore, in the seventh Canto there is the description of only some virtues of the Lord, in the tenth some of His qualities which cannot be termed virtuous are also given. Why is it so ?

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1. The first line ( a little changed ) is from Rigveda M. 10, S. 90, R. 3, and the second from the Bhagwadgita X—19. The whole verse in the Rigveda carries the same sense as the whole verse in Bhagwadgita. They both show the inconceivable greatness and glory of the 'Purusha' ( The Infinite Soul ). The lines given above mean :

The above is only His greatness, but the Purusha is beyond it ( first line ); but O Arjuna, they are given as a selection from a few of my manifestations. In reality, there is no end to their number and can never be given in full.



“There is reason for it. The seventh canto is for the spiritual aspirant, the struggling soul. Those forms and those dharmic actions alone are mentioned in it in which a sadhak should worship Him or which he should perform as his bhakti-in-action. But in the tenth canto the Lord wants to point out his omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent nature, which he only hints at in the following verse of the seventh canto :

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये ।

मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु तेमयि ॥ ( VII—12 )

meaning : ( “Know that all the manifestations of the three gunas *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, proceed from none but Me ; yet I am not in them, they are in me” ). Though this verse appears at the end of His manifestations in 7th canto, its more detailed explanation is given in the 10th, because in that canto the Lord wants to impress upon Arjuna that all the manifestations of all the qualities, good, bad, or even the worst, issue out of Him, and “whatever is glorious, beautiful, and mighty, know that all such has issued from a fragment of my splendour” ( X-41 ). The Powerful uses his power, but because there is ingrained in him the omnipresent Power.

Though Ravana was a wicked man, the terrible power that he possessed was due to some good quality; for instance, he knew the Vedas. He gained his power from that. Wherever there is ‘Shakti’ (=Power ), there is necessarily Shiva (—the Lord ) too. Hence, wherever, in the infinite number of the Lord’s form, we see any vibhuti (speciality, excellence, power, enthusiasm ), we should take it as a fragment (=a tiny form ) of the Lord. But we need not imitate all these vibhutis (superb manifestations). There is “I am the mountain Meru among all the mountains ( मेरुः शिखरिणामहम् । Gita X-23. Meru is the mountain of gold ). And then there is “I am the Ganga among the rivers ( स्रोतसामस्मि जान्हवी X-31 ). It means I am the purity of the Ganga. And no matter where we are, we say, “O, Ganga ! Yamuna ! Godavari ! Saraswati ! Narmada ! Sindhu ! Kaveri ! You may please flow into this water.” It means we

should see any and every flow of water as the Lord's manifestation. All this is only to show the boundless greatness of the Lord.

In the last verse ( of the 10th canto ) the Lord says, "But why needest thou to learn this at great length, O Arjuna ? With but a part ( fragment ) of myself I stand upholding the whole universe."

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञानेन तवार्जुन ।

विष्टम्याहमिदंकृत्स्नमे एकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ ( X-42 )

As Jnyaneshwar says, there is God's element in everything and everybody, small or big, good or bad. There is never any absence of purpose or meaning ( vaiyarthya ) in God's activity. True, we may not always be able to see that purpose, but it is enough for us if we can understand that everything that is is God's manifestation ( vibhuti ). The tenth canto is thus the Lord's answer to the question, "O Lord ! tell me in what different aspects or things I can think of you ?" ( Gita X-17 ). And He says there is not a single thing ( not even an atom ), in which I cannot be conceived as manifesting Myself. Thus while in the seventh Canto the purifying vibhutis ( manifestations ) are given, in the tenth specimens of all conceivable vibhutis are indicated.

22-12 1925

The discourse which Gandhiji gave this morning referred to the talk with him on the 19th.<sup>1</sup> Before beginning it, he asked me to sing the hymn, beginning with, "The earth has the great merit of being the plane on which the Lord can be worshipped, a merit that heaven lacks in."<sup>2</sup> "But when I had finished only two lines, he stopped me and addressed the Ashramites :

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1. See Supra. pp. 341.

2. "भूतल भक्ति पदारथ मोटुं"—The earth is karma-loka, the world where you have to act for God's realization and the Heaven is bhoga-loka where a virtuous man merely enjoys the fruit of his good acts, but from which he has to come back to the earth for the soul's complete realization.



“It is ten years since I came from Africa. I have received by now hundreds of letters and I have answered them. I have clarified such points a thousand times in ‘Navajivan’ and ‘Young India.’ All the same, after my arrival in this Wardha Ashram, those same questions were put here. That recalled to my mind some past events and made me very unhappy. I don’t say that such questions should not arise in the mind, but if they do, Vinoba should be approached and the doubts resolved. But what pained me was the fact that the disease of asking such mystifying questions has grown into an epidemic these days. Such questions should never be asked. But please understand me. Such questions are quite likely or even certain to arise, but we should suppress them in our own mind. The battle of Kurukshetra, where the doubts that arose in Arjuna’s mind were removed by the Lord in the Bhagwad Gita, was fought thousands of years ago. But that battle of Kurukshetra is constantly raging in our mind and will continue to do so; and Yogeshwar ( prince of Yogis ) Krishna, i. e., the Indweller deep within will always guide the Arjuna, meaning the jiva ( developing soul ) within us. And in that battle the devilish forces are always certain to be defeated and the divine to succeed. But so long as that victory is not achieved, we must keep up our faith in the ultimate victory of these divine forces, let the battle go on and have patience. Not that we must suppress our inward inquisitiveness for fear of anybody, but if it puts the question, ‘Who created God ?’, we should still the mind, understand that it is atheism to let the mind put it and have the faith that the answer will spring up of itself in that questioning mind some day.

“This body which God has given us is at once a prison and a door that leads to *mukti*. But if we want to use it for gaining *mukti*, we should understand the limitation our body is subject to. Let the desire to enclose the whole heavens above in our embrace arise in our mind, but we should know that we don’t possess that power, because our soul is clogged with the weight of the body and it cannot fly as high as we would wish it to. It

does possess the like potentiality of gaining numerous miraculous powers ( siddhis ), but it loses *mukti* in its attempt to gain them. That is why I say that we must avoid questions relating to the ultimate—under the one assurance that gradually as the innate power of the Soul unfolds itself, it will automatically give us light in such matters. Instead of dabbling in such metaphysical subjects we must, according to the ( Gujarati ) song :

“Seize the chance, enjoy this day;  
Who has seen tomorrow, pray ?”

“Somebody may take this as an expression of a Charvak ( a Bohemian philosopher of India ). Does not this verse of Charvak seem to carry the same meaning ?

यावज्जीवेत्सुखं जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।  
भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनरागमनं कुतः ॥

( Enjoy life while it lasts, take butter ( ghee ) even if you have run into debts for it. How is it ever possible for this body to return, after once it turns into ashes in the crematorium ? ) But no, the former is not the expression of a Charvak. It is, on the contrary, the outpouring of a devotional heart; when he says, ‘Seize the chance, enjoy this day’ he means, we must do the duty that faces us today, since nobody knows whether we shall be alive tomorrow; and if we don’t seize today’s chance to remember the Lord, we shall have again to return to the earth ( for gaining fitness ). And what is ‘today’s duty’ for us ? That is what Vinoba explained the other day; दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम् Destruction of all the afflicted souls’ sovereign grief,—the bondage of births and deaths. There is only one means for that destruction and that is devotion. A Lord’s English devotee, Cardinal Newman, has sung :

“One step enough for me.”

“That single line puts, as it were, all true philosophy in a nutshell. That one step means, resolute and patient devotion. If a sick man suddenly gets up and goes down the staircase,



he would feel dizzy and fall down headlong. If we do not understand our limitation and still try to get the knowledge of the limitless ultimate, the result would be not true knowledge but the sprue of little knowledge.

“Hence, let us throw out the disease of putting metaphysical questions from which we suffer, postpone them for tomorrow, and do our duty for today. This same thing, ( we must not hanker after ‘mukti’ but go on doing ‘bhakti’ ), is emphasised in the hymn one or two lines of which were sung today. Without bhakti there is no mukti. Hence, the man, who is intent on discharging his present duty and keeps his mind saturated with bhakti, can get mukti. He attains mukti who does not at all think of mukti.

“And bhakti does not mean unpractical behaviour. That is not real bhakti which produces it. True, the world may not understand our action and call us fools, but that is a different story. But he is a bhakta, who is busily engaged in worldly activities and yet saturates them with dharma. Every act of a devotee will be in consonance with dharma. Krishna was able to attune his conduct with dharma and, hence, he is called “poorna avatara” ( God’s perfect incarnation ). The true Bhakta never finds any difficulty in the performance of his worldly duties.

“Ashramas like this one are founded with a view to propagate conduct that is in conformity with dharma. Hence, I cherish the hope that through these ashramas we shall raise both this country and dharma. Whether that hope is realized today or after many re-incarnations, I don’t care. It is enough for us if we go on doing our work in such a way as to walk along the path thus chalked out. For that we must have in us the spirit of the Brahmin, meaning truth and faith, as well as that of the Kshatriya, that is, strength and non-violence. I have the faith that this Ashram will be the breeding ground of both these Brahmana and Kshatriya qualities. I don’t say that other Ashrams cannot help in their development, but I am convinced that this Ashrama is definitely going to help us in the matter.

Let us first understand what truthful and non-violent action means for us today and then act according to that light. Let us have the faith that no fundamental principle admits of an exception. Then 'final truth' and 'final non-violence' will reveal themselves to us in the natural course of our sadhana.

"The religious way in which actions are performed in this ashram, have given me an inner peace, the like of which I have never felt before. And you can imagine what I may be feeling when I am about to leave this peace and plunge again into the vortex of society. But as I told a friend, our study of the Gita had no meaning, if we were afraid that our peace of mind would be disturbed by commotions raging outside. We must attain peace that springs from within, not from the environment without. Hence, I refuse to be worried at the prospect of the coming turmoil."

On our way to Cawnpore, we joined Sarojini Devi at Bhusaval. Before we did, we had come to know that a handful of men in Cawnpore were opposed to the Presidentship of Sarojini Devi and were taking steps to make a rousing reception to her impossible. The Press also had publicised the move. We were, therefore, worried at the thought that this opposition would be a great stain on the Congress and India. But Sarojini Devi was prepared to face the music. She herself opened the subject and laughed away our worry : "I have received many letters—from communists ( orthodox Hindu communalists ? ). They say, they have no quarrel with me, but I have forgotten my dharma and become a 'cosmopolitan.' They don't approve of that and would not welcome me. I pity them. They have kept even black flags ready for me ! It will be such a funny sight ! Padmaja ( daughter of Sarojini Devi ) has come with me just to see that fun." But we did not meet with the sight that would have tickled Sarojini Devi and her daughter and pained us. Men came to welcome her in crowds and crowds and there was nothing wanting in either the decorations of the town or the enthusiasm of its citizens. At the same time, one must add that there were not many women of this province who



threw aside their purdah and came out to see this historical event of a Hindu woman being made the President of the Congress. Only a few women could be seen in the pandal and outside. The Begum of Hasrat Mohani Saheb was indeed present, but hers, it may be said, was a conspicuous exception.

24-12-1925

Addressing the All India Congress Committee at the time of his retirement from the Congress Presidentship Gandhiji said :

@ "Neither without sorrow nor pleasure I retire from office, I have daily increasing faith in the momentous step we took at Calcutta and repeated at Nagpur.<sup>1</sup> I would not want to retrace a single step or recall a single item. Last year we restricted our programme in order that all the different parties may work upon it—need not say with success. This time we are about to take a new step. It is nothing strange in the history of this institution. Even as our body changes every day, change is the law of nature. Therefore, it does not agitate me that we are going in for a change. What we, men, have failed to achieve, let us hope she will be able to achieve.

"I gratefully acknowledge the support you have given to the chair. You made it a pleasure for me to preside over the deliberations of this body. You respected my rulings, if any.

"But I can't say you responded to the resolutions we passed. If you had done that, we should have opened a new chapter and I would not have had to say that what we failed to do, let Sarojini Devi achieve. May God help her and her effort.

"Her honour was overdue. She came back from South Africa with wonderful work to her credit. Through her poetry, her sweet reasonableness and persuasion, she bearded the lion in his own den and from reports reaching me I began to feel that we had sent an ambassador who achieved what no man achieved. I got letters from Europeans asking me, "Could you not send Mrs. Naidu again?"

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1. Reference to the non-co-operation and civil-disobedience movement in 1921, which he himself withdrew in March 1922 owing to the outburst of violence in Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces.

"But I must give you a word of caution. Men are misers—women are over-generous. I have dealt with your finances in a miserly way and let her also come down to our level and spend our finances as miser.

"And let me close with the prayer that God may bless her effort and our effort. Let us hope, if we do not see Swaraj, these so many dark clouds will have been dispelled before she gives up the reins".

Sarojini Devi then stood up :

@ "I cannot claim to possess the many qualities attributed to me, but utter devotion to the Cause I do claim. As you have called upon me to be a servant, you will have to guide me and help me peacefully, generously, and wisely."

Gandhiji then proposed the Patna Resolution for acceptance by the A. I. C. C. According to it two qualifications were needed for Congress membership : ( 1 ) annual subscription of 4 annas per year or contribution of 2000 yards of yarn and ( 2 ) wearing of Khaddar on Congress and other public functions. Pandit Motilal Nehru supported it. There were two amendments. Mr. Hamid's amendment required the restriction of Congress membership to only those who *always* wore Khadi. Mr. Kelkar's amendment required the deletion of both Khadi-wearing and yarn-subscription conditions.

Sri Srinivasa Iyengar said :

@ "The only success to our credit is Khadi. Others have begun to adopt Khadi in our imitation. The Justice Party has taken to it. There is a Khadi Exhibition even in association with the Conference held under the patronage of a Minister of Bombay."

Many may wonder how there could be any opposition to Gandhiji's resolution, since the yarn subscription for membership of the Congress was now made optional. But some members were averse to wearing Khadi even on public functions only. The resolution, therefore, raised a good deal of discussion. The opposition came not only from Maharashtrians, which was expected, but from some others also.



In reply to the discussion Gandhiji said :

@ "Babasaheb and Sambamurti have asked me to withdraw the resolution moved by me. It is not within my power to do so. I happen to be by accident the mover of this resolution. It is the Working Committee's ( the highest body of the Congress), resolution. Any appeal to me personally is irrelevant. You must remove every individual member from your consideration. If we are going to evolve democratic institutions, we must dismiss these human equations. You ask me, moreover, to set aside deeprooted personal convictions, which are everyday growing on me.

"Now as regards Messrs. Jayakar and Kelkar ( Maharashtrian leaders ) I differ from them. I say that franchise restrictions depend upon the goal you have in view. Shall we fight shy of things because they are difficult ? Shall we fight shy of Swaraj for which we are working day in and day out, in expectation that we shall wrest it one day from unwilling hands ? We have made many changes in the spinning franchise. We can make no more change. If I was a freelance, I would have only spinning and Khaddar. Messrs. Jayakar and Kelkar represent a considerable body of opinion. But I cannot forget our goal. The worth of the Congress is not to be counted by the number of members it has, but by the work every member is doing.

"If I was sure that we could get Swaraj by having a crore ( ten millions ) of members, I would go to the country and do it, irrespective of age, etc. If you want to go back, why not have a resolution of having a free franchise ? A Congressman would not be worth his salt, if he does nothing for the Congress. If you want the boycott of foreign cloth, you must not think of the mills. I come from a part where there are numerous mills. I know the millowners. They are not patriotic. This Government, besides, may close the mills, stop the import of all machinery, but can't burn the spindles. They stopped entry of a German engineer. I have faith in English nature, as I have in human nature. But an ordinary Englishman thinks that the

interests of his country are best served by keeping Lancashire alive and dumping on an unwilling country the tawdry things from Lancashire. Swaraj is not a cheap thing. You will have to buy it with blood. I know that the time is coming, when the country will say, 'Gandhi is right'.

"So long as the majority is with me, I coax you, appeal to you, and say, 'Just this sacrifice is required. Do not grudge it. It becomes punishable if you don't wear Khaddar on political occasions, but it does not mean that every time you leave a political platform, you have your foreign things to wear. Why cannot we trust Congressmen to act honestly? Is it too much to ask people to respond to Congress resolutions? If you are conscientious objectors, you must retire. If I remain a Congressman, in whatever minority, I must carry out the resolution of the Congress. A microscopic minority imposes its will on millions of people and we are not even conscious of the tyrant's will and raise chimerical objections. If you banish Khaddar from your midst today, the people will discount your professions, you will be no better than Liberals. We are a mystical people. And these electors of yours will not distinguish between you and Liberals. I have a record of ten years' service. I sleep with them, drink with them, live with them. I feel with them."

147 votes were cast against Mr. Kelkar's amendment and 20 for it. The original proposal was then passed by 142 against 20.

26-12-1925

Letter to A ( an Ashramite ) ;

"Your letter to hand. It relieved me of my fear that you might be carried away by B's misguidance. It is our dharma to know everybody at his true worth and yet to love him, whether he be a saint or a sinner. We often define love as a sentiment that cannot see any fault in the person loved. ( But that is not right. ) It was definitely wrong for C ( A's daughter ) to hide the worst part of her acts in her confession, but that



has not pained me. I felt nothing but pity for her. She trembled at having to confess so much. We are not shocked when we commit a most heinous sin, but we find it very hard and irksome to have to confess it. But how many may there be in this whole world who not only can see the gravity of their sins, but also let the world know of it ? You cannot expect C to rise to that height. May God save her now. You were right in disclosing the whole affair to D ( C's future husband )".

Letter to C :

"I am not satisfied with the letter that you, the two sisters, have written. You should not shelter yourselves behind the ( Gujarati ) saying, "Children may be naughty, but mothers will be mothers still." Those children who excuse themselves on that ground will not make any ( spiritual ) progress. It is the dharma of the children to surpass the achievements of their parents. Hence, not you but I am entitled to say, "These are my faults and you, my daughters, ( Gandhiji was all Ashramites' father ) may put up with them. But, beware ! Never fall a prey to them; if you fall, I am undone." Behind a couple's yearning for a child lies their hope that their progeny will shed lustre on them, will surpass them in virtue, and they will psychically live on through it. It is owing to this idea of continuance that Ramachandra said : It is the ancestral behaviour of the Raghu line to keep the plighted word even at the cost of death." He did not say, "The behaviour is mine—Ramachandra's." Ramachandra uplifted the whole Raghu race by his life. In the same way you too may raise your father and his ancestors and therethrough the Ashram. The Ashram has many drawbacks; we, the elders, are responsible for them; but should you—the youngsters—adopt them ? It is your dharma to assimilate whatever is good in the Ashram. I was sorry that you were inclined to free yourselves from your promise to write to me. It is in youth that a person can do 'purushartha' ( strenuous effort for something good ). For those who are wise, youth is meant for developing, not wilful licence but self-restraint.

"Perhaps you will not be able to understand this letter in its full implication. Get it explained by your father and do not tear it off. I have remembered you both in the midst of a very heavy pressure of work. I wanted to write just a few words, but the letter grew, and took a serious note. That is why I have asked you to preserve it."

### **The Congress at Cawnpore**

It is not possible to say that the heart was as pleased with the deliberations and working of the Congress, as it was with its discipline and arrangements. When I was giving the heading, 'The Congress at Cawnpore,' it struck me in passing that it was hardly wrong to use the title "The Divan-Khas at Cawnpore" (—The session of the House of Lords ).

True, the Delegate's fee for this Congress session was 1 rupee—an amount which even the poor could afford—and many villagers did attend the Congress, and equally true that the attraction of the Khadi Exhibition was tempting enough to draw hordes of people; all the same I could not help the feeling that the Congress had begun thenceforth to lose its character of being a Congress of the masses and turn into a Congress of the classes.

Let us examine the reasons for my feeling. Take first of all the very speech of the President. It may perhaps be rightly termed the shortest Presidential speech in the history of the Congress. And it is a wonder how Sarojini Devi, who believes in extempore speeches only, could ever manage to sit down to write a speech. And even that short speech was full of grandiloquent expressions. But whom could all that flowery peroration charm? The masses? With the best of sympathies, the answer is a sad 'no'. It is difficult for me to translate her speech and any good translation worth the name would be hard for the masses to understand. Srimati ( Naidu ) can speak charming Urdu—I have heard her speaking beautiful Urdu at least once or twice myself, but at Cawnpore neither were the copies of the translation of her speech in Hindi or Urdu distributed,



among the public, nor did she deliver her oral speech in Urdu. If anybody objected that it would be cruel to expect her to speak in Urdu, after the delivery of her speech in English for an hour or an hour and a half, I would tell him, 'It would have been much more becoming, if she had dropped her English speech entirely and spoken in Urdu instead.'

So much for the President's speech. And the resolutions? Except for two or three, none others were such as might interest the masses. The number of speeches in English, moreover, exceeded that in the national language. When the language of the most hotly contested resolution appeared difficult to understand for men like myself, one can imagine how completely obscure it must have appeared to the illiterate people.

The first of the two or three resolutions, which, I said, interested the masses, was the one about South Africa and that too because it was proposed by Gandhiji. The second was the resolution that confirmed the changes in the spinning franchise which the A. I. C. C. at Patna had made. The third was the one that required the deliberations of the Congress and its branches to be conducted in Hindustani or the local language.

Let me give here the substance of the resolution re. South Africa. The Congress suggested one or two measures to stop the passage of the Bill<sup>1</sup> that aimed at driving out the Indians from South Africa. The first was the appointment of an Inquiry Committee to find out whether or not the many later measures passed by the South African Government were breaches of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, which promised that no further disabilities would be imposed on Indians. The second, the convening of a Round Table Conference having South African Indians' representation in it. And if the South African Government took neither of the above two measures, the third was the directive that it was the duty of the British Empire to send an order to its Viceroy there to put the Emperor's veto on

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1. The Bill was entitled "The Area. Reservation and Immigration. Registration ( Further Provision ) Bill."

the Bill. The resolution also stated that India would give all possible help to the South African Indians in their struggle for their rights, if none of the three suggested steps were taken.

Gandhiji first spoke in Hindi when he proposed this resolution :

“You all know, brothers and sisters, that a few of our brothers of South Africa have come here to narrate their woes and to secure help for their redress from India and the British Empire. A Damoclese’s sword is hanging over their heads. Devi ( Sarojini Devi ) said that I belonged not to India, but to South Africa. The deputation that has come here, with Dr. Abdur Rehman at their head, will also claim me as their South African brother. I accept their claim. I was a stripling when I returned from England after my education there. And you know that before staying here even for full 2 years, I went away to South Africa and lived there for 20. If I have been able to do something, good or bad here, it is due to all that I learnt there. Hence, I am rightly regarded as a South African Indian and I claim to understand their sorrows<sup>1</sup>.

“That Bill really means that our brothers will have to leave South Africa. No one who cares for his self-respect or honour can stay there. The Bill holds out another threat. It may make it unnecessary for the South African Government to give a single penny to those who may be compelled to leave the land and it may support the Government’s contention that their repatriation is only voluntary. There are many well established businessmen there, as they deal not only with Indians but with both the Whites and the Negroes there. Hundreds of Indians would lose their livelihood and cannot stay in South Africa, if a law, restricting their business to the small number of a hundred and fifty thousand Indians only, were passed. It is because those two classes—the Whites and the Negroes—carry on business with us, that we have been able to live there. The big White businessmen cannot or will not see this point. But

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1. See Appendix IV



the real fact is that the Whites do not want the coloured races — Brown, Yellow, or Black—to live there. There are a few Indian doctors and barristers who too may be compelled to leave South Africa. Many of them were born in South Africa itself. One of the members of the Deputation, Mr. James Godfrey, was born there. He sees India for the first time. Under the law proposed even he cannot stay there.

“What shall we do then ?

“In the Agreement made between the Government and our people in 1914 (called the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement, but Gandhiji's etiquette prevents him from naming it as such), there was a clause which stated that those laws, which remained unannulled till then, would be applied in a way that did not adversely affect any of the two parties to the Agreement and that no law imposing fresh disabilities would be passed thenceforth. This Agreement has been broken already twice or thrice. But the climax has been reached now. When, thirty years ago, our people were suffering from injustices and hardships in the Transvaal, the British Government has affirmed that Indians were British subjects and that they were not to be treated unfairly by the Boers. Later on, even a Commission was appointed to interpret correctly one clause of that treaty. When the Congress sent Sarojini Devi to South and East Africa, she suggested the holding of a Round Table Conference for the solution of the whole question. Mr. Thomas, the Minister for Colonies, of the Labour Government, then went there. He also accepted this suggestion.

“If none of these two measures are taken by the South African Government, the British Empire's duty is clear. It should send the Viceroy an order to veto the Bill. On behalf of you all, this resolution states that you accept the alternatives proposed and that you are ready to give our brothers any help they want, It means that all of you are prepared to share their sorrows with them.

“What does the resolution come to mean ? One of the members asked yesterday, “Is not this resolution a mockery ?”

He suggested instead that Pandit Motilalji (Swarajist leader) and Sarojini Devi (the President) should only issue a joint statement promising Congress help to the South African Indians. This resolution lends a more impressive and solid support. But please do not sleep over the resolution, once it is passed, and you must have the faith and determination to do all that is necessary. The Swaraj Party must take the decision to prepare the country for a fight, if it cannot get any of the suggestions made in the resolution accepted by the Government. And the Congress also must resolve not merely to help any Satyagraha in South Africa that may be started there, but in addition to launch upon Satyagraha here. We should offer Satyagraha, not only against an insult to our national flag as at Nagpur, not only against an iniquitous poll tax as at Borsad, but also against the persecution of our brothers who live far away. If I see an atmosphere right today that shows me that Hindus and Muslims have given up their madness and become united, that they have understood that both Hindus and Muslims are equally stigmatised by insults impartially hurled at them in South Africa and that a Satyagraha should therefore be offered, and if our brothers in South Africa send us a message that they are ready for Satyagraha and we should start one here, then, I say, helpless like a corpse as I appear to be at present, right today you will find me aggressively alive in order to put up such a fight."

(What follows after his Hindi speech is reproduced from "Young India" d. 7-1-1926).

@ "In order that Dr. Abdur Rehman may understand his feelings in the matter, and in order also that his word of warning may reach the ears of South African statesmen, Mr. Gandhi expressed himself at length in English thus :

"This is the resolution which I have not only the greatest pleasure in submitting to you for approval, but I consider it a rare privilege that I am authorised by Sarojini Devi to place it before you. She has introduced me to you as a South African. She might have added, 'by adoption.' Though born in India,



I was adopted by South Africa, and you will discover that when Dr. Rehman, the leader of the deputation—to which you will extend your cordial welcome—comes on this platform, he will tell you that Indians of South Africa claim that they have given me to you. I accept that claim. It is perfectly true that whatever service I have been able to render—it may be disservice—to India, comes from South Africa. If it is disservice it is not their fault, it is through my limitation. I propose to place before you facts in support of the statement made here that the Bill, which is hanging like the sword of Damocles over the heads of our countrymen in South Africa is designed not merely to heap greater wrongs upon their hands, but virtually to expel them from South Africa.

### **An Expulsion Bill**

“Such is admittedly the meaning of the Bill. It is admitted by the Europeans of South Africa and it is not denied by the Union Government itself. If such is the result, you can imagine how keenly the Indians in South Africa must feel. Imagine for one moment that an Expulsion Bill in the next session of the Assembly is to be passed expelling one hundred thousand Indians from India. What should we do or how should we behave under such a crisis? It is under such circumstances that you have the deputation in your midst. It comes here for support from the people of India, from the Congress, from the Viceroy, the Government of India, and through it the Imperial Government itself.

### **Lord Reading's Reply**

“Lord Reading has given them a long reply, and I wish I could have said also a satisfactory reply. The reply His Excellency has given is as unsatisfactory as it is long, and if that was all the comfort that Lord Reading proposed to give to the members of the deputation, he could have said in a few words and spared them, and spared this land, the humiliating spectacle of a great Government confessing its inability to render proper redress to those who, for no fault of their own, and who,

as many South African Europeans would admit, for their very virtues, are now in danger of being expelled from South Africa. To some of them South Africa is a land of their birth. It was no comfort to those friends of ours, it is no comfort to us, to be told that the Indian Government has always reserved to itself the right of making representations to the South African Government—the right of petitioning That is to say, a mighty Government, a Government which is supposed to hold the destiny of 300 millions of people in the hollow of its hands, that Government confesses its powerlessness! And why? Because South Africa enjoys Dominion Status, because South Africa threatens to “cut the painter,” if the Indian and the Imperial Governments intervene in any of the steps that the Government of South Africa may take.

### **“Domestic Policy”**

“Lord Reading has told the deputation that the Indian Government or Imperial Government may not interfere with the domestic policy of a colony enjoying Dominion Status. What is the meaning of “domestic policy,” when that policy is calculated to bring ruin upon the homes of Indian settlers domiciled there, and whom they deny the common right of humanity? Is that domestic policy? Well, what would be the case if, instead of Indians, they happened to be Europeans or Englishmen?

“Let me quote a precedent. Do you know why the great Boer War took place? It took place in order to protect the Europeans of South Africa who were domiciled there, “Uitlanders” as they were described by the Transvaal Republican Government. The late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain claimed for the British Government that even though the Transvaal was an independent Government, he declined to admit that this was purely a domestic question. He claimed to protect the rights of the “Uitlanders” of the Transvaal, and that was why the great Boer War took place.



## **"Conflict of Civilizations"**

"Lord Lansdowne, in justification of the War, said that it made his blood boil when he thought of the disabilities of Indians in the Transvaal. He held that one of the potent causes of the Boer War was the disabilities of Indians in South Africa, or more accurately Indians of the Transvaal. Where are those declarations today? Why does not the British Government go to War against the Union Government, when the life, honour, and livelihood of one hundred and fifty thousand Indians are at stake?

"Nobody questions the description I have given to you of the effects of this legislation. Nobody questions the evergrowing grievances of the British Indians in South Africa. If you have seen a beautiful little pamphlet published by Bishop Fisher who went a few months ago to South Africa, you will find that there he gives a summary of the wrongs that are being heaped upon the South African Indians. The Bishop has come to the imperial conclusion that for these wrongs the Indians are not to blame. It is the jealousy and the insolence of the European trader that is responsible for these wrongs. He gives his testimony that Indians have deserved better at the hands of Europeans of South Africa. If justice counts, if Right rules the world, it should be impossible to bring this Bill and unnecessary for me to waste your precious time and for the deputation to waste their money.

"But evidently Right does not count. Might is Right. The Europeans of South Africa have chosen to heap this wrong upon our countrymen, and for what purpose? "Conflict of the two civilizations." It is not my expression. It is that of General Smuts. He cannot put up with it. Europeans of South Africa consider that they will be overwhelmed by the East, if they allow hoards to pour down into South Africa from India. But how could we corrupt their civilisation? Is it because we live as thrifty men and women? Because we are not ashamed to hawk vegetables and fruits and bring them to the very doors of the South African farmers? The South African farms are

not like the farms of India, mere patches of land on which no man can live. The South African farms are not two or three *bighas*, but hundreds of acres belonging to one man, who is the sole undisputed owner of them. You understand what great service the Indian hawkers are rendering to these South African, European or Boer farmers. That is the conflict.

### **Peril of Islam**

“Someone has said, I do not know where but only recently, that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent of Islam— Islam that civilised Spain, Islam that took the torch-light to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of Brotherhood. The Europeans in South Africa dread the advent of Islam, for they are afraid of the fact that if the native races embrace Islam, they may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it. If brotherhood is a sin, if it is equality of coloured races that they dread, then that dread is well founded. For I have seen that any Zulu embracing Christianity does not *ipso facto* come on level with all Christians, whilst immediately he embraces Islam, he drinks from the same cup and eats from the same dish as a Mussalman. That is what they dread. The thing is, they want to become lords of the universe. They want to appropriate the land for themselves. The Kaiser, though down-trodden, fears an Asiatic federation and speaks even from his exile that it is a danger which Europeans should guard themselves against. That is the conflict of civilizations and that is why Lord Reading is powerless to intervene in their domestic policy.

“Such are the tremendous consequences of the struggle which this resolution describes as unequal, and it is in that unequal struggle that the Congress is called upon to take its due share. I want to make an appeal, if my voice can go as far as South Africa, to the statesmen that are ruling the destiny of South African Indians.

### **The Bright Side**

“I have so far given you only the dark side of South



African Europeans. Let me say that I claim among them some of my most precious friends and I have enjoyed from individual South African Europeans the greatest kindness and the greatest hospitality. I claim the privilege of having been a close friend of that great poetess and philanthropist and that most self-effacing woman—Olive Schreiner. She was a friend of the Indians equally with the natives of South Africa. She knew no distinction between white and black races. She loved the Indian, the Zulu, and the Bantu, as her own children. She would prefer to accept the hospitality of a South African native in his humble hut. What she gave away with her right hand, her left hand never knew. Such precious men and women have also been born and bred in South Africa.

### A Warning

“I can give you many more such names. I claim also to know General Smuts, though I may not claim to be his friend. He was party to the agreement on behalf of his Government with me on behalf of the Indians. It was he who said that the British Indians in South Africa deserved that settlement. It was he who said that that was a final settlement and Indians should not threaten passive resistance and that the European settlers in South Africa should allow rest to the Indian community.

“But hardly had I turned my back from South Africa then a series of wrongs began to be heaped upon them. Where is the plighted word of General Smuts? General Smuts will go one of these days the same way that every human being has to go, but his words and deeds shall remain after him. He is not a mere individual. He spoke the right thing in his representative capacity. He claims to be a Christian and every one of the members of the South African Government makes the same claim. Before they open their Parliament, they read the Common Prayer from the Bible and a South African Divine opens the proceedings with a prayer that goes up to God, not the God of the White-man, not the God of the Negro, not of

the Mussalman, not of the Hindu. but the God of all, the God of the Universe.

"I say this from my place of position, and knowing my responsibility to its fullest extent, that they will deny their Bible, they will deny their God, if they hesitate for one moment, if they fail to render the elementary justice that is due to the Indians of South Africa."

Gandhiji did not propose the franchise resolution in the Congress session. There was no need for it, as the Delegates who had come there after paying the fee of 1 rupee were definitely only common men, not intellectuals, and did not require arguments on behalf of Khadi. All the same, the resolution did meet with opposition – but not from Maharashtrians, who knew that their amendment would meet with a fate even more miserable than at the All India Congress Committee. The opponent in the Congress session was one lonely figure – that of Maulana Hasrat Mohani. As he stood up for opposition though he knew full well that nobody was going to listen to him, the Maulana evoked admiration for his courage, but also nothing but pity for his arguments. His strongest plea was that of coercion. 'Why should I be compelled to submit to the majority view?' he asked. This franchise, he said, was like the trick of Aurangzeb who, in order to compel Shivaji to bow down to him, made the entrance door too small for Shivaji's height. But had this analogy any legs to stand upon? What a difference between Aurangzeb and the franchise resolution! And what a difference between the lion-hearted Shivaji who would never bend his knees before the mightiest monarch and our cringing people grovelling in slavery for the last 150 years!

Maulana Mohammad Ali thrashed him soundly. It would have been an excellent speech, if it had been short; but when Maulana rises up to speak specially when he wants to trounce somebody – you never know when he will end. Let me give here some of his lashes :

"You talk of coercion. How much tyranny you put up with from a handful of Englishmen! You want to fight, but refuse to



wear the soldier's uniform ! But I say, even if the resolution required me to flay myself for getting enrolled, I would join the ranks. This intelligentsia is the most unintelligent in the world. Show me one country, where cotton grows in abundance, but is exported and finished cloth imported. Gandhi's remedy seems a piffle to us. Who would care to use the two-penny powder-packet of our Gandhi<sup>1</sup>, when we 'the learned' want a thousand rupees worth of strychnine brought from the West to keep us alive ?”

A Delegate from Madras, Sri Venkatraman said, “I have a lot of mill shares, but have no hesitation in supporting this resolution. There is no conflict of interests between mill cloth and Khadi”.

27-12-1925

28-12-1925

The principal resolution was about the council programme. The discussions that it raised, the mushroom of amendments that grew upon it, the stinging speeches that were delivered from morning to evening, the battle of words that was fought over it, —all these reminded me repeatedly of our Akha Bhagat's satire :<sup>2</sup>

एकनुं थाप्युं बीजो हणे अन्यथी आपने अदको गणे ।  
अखा, ए अंधारो कूवो भगडो भांगी कोई न मूओ ॥

B disproves what A has proved  
And thinks himself above the rest ;  
A well of darkness that, wherein  
None to the light of truth attest.

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1. This is a pun on the word 'Gandhi'. In Gujarati and Hindi the word means 'grocer', who sells not only articles of domestic use, but cheap homely medicines also.

2. A man of true spiritual wisdom who wrote much abstruse philosophical literature in simple verse. Though he himself disclaimed poetical merit, he lives even today – after nearly 3 centuries—as a poet-philosopher. He is specially popular for his satires and known for his piety as Akha Bhāgat = Akha the man of God.

Nearly all the speeches, except those of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajput Rai, were delivered in English and even these two were too long for the patience of the audience. And as all these disputations were held almost wholly in English, the poor Delegates were in the position of the old man who inquired about the Battle of Blenheim : 'But what they fought each other for ?' Like him they cried out, "Please explain in Hindi your Resolution and the amendments so that we may understand what you are fighting over."

And everyone quoted Gandhiji in support of his contention ! ( Gandhiji was not present then; had he been, he would have enjoyed the fun so much ! )

Malaviyaji<sup>1</sup> said :

"Our policy of 1919 is continuing. There is a placard here bearing the inscription, "Be Honest". I say this same thing. Gandhiji too says the same. Non-co-operation failed and Swarajists came in its wake. To them I say, "Go to the councils, if you like " But there they formulated one policy ( of consistent obstruction ) and then gave it up. It is my misfortune that I have to say that my friend, Motilal Nehru, has failed. I accept that non-co-operation—civil-disobedience—is a constitutional remedy. Non-payment of taxes also is another such. Why, even an armed rebellion for redress of grievances and not for overthrowing the Empire is a constitutional remedy. And, in fact, that alone is the final, the invincible weapon. But don't discuss it, if you are not ready for it. You should take a measure that brings about true non-co-operation. The need of the hour for the salvation of the country is one heart, one voice, one call to our country men. The Government does not listen to our demands today and noble souls like

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1. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji proposed and Mr. Jayakar seconded an amendment which favoured 'responsive co-operation.'



Khadaksingh<sup>1</sup> are rotting in jail. How is it, I ask you, that the Government beats you down in every battle? The only way to victory is one strong, united, Congress Party. As things stand at present, we are fighting among ourselves. As you have thus allowed the formation of parties within the Congress, such internal feuds are bound to continue. What is really required is a programme that can unite us all—landlords and tenants, Moderates, Swarajists, Independents, and all, I am sure what I say is right. If today you will not accept my plea, tomorrow you will have to. Dedication of the self, not for a party but for the country—that is what we want to-day. Listen to Gandhiji's advice."

@ "The Resolution is the official resolution of the Swaraj Party. Messrs Kelkar, Munje, and myself resigned our seats we occupied as Swarajists. Let us without recrimination state our experiences. Both views are honest—either believe in the council programme or not. If you want to remain in councils, take the last juice you can. It does mean a considerable amount of humiliation but suffer it in the interests of honesty. The present Resolution is neither here nor there. Why have the clause emblazoning time after time our weakness? It deceives no one. It is, as some critics say, a camouflage to catch the votes of the unwary voter. Read the story of civil disobedience. I agree with Mahatma Gandhi, the one man in the country who understands the "beeja" (=seed=basis) of the mantra of civil disobedience. Be guided by him. He asks you not to accept this course. Take the most honest and humiliating course (of responsive co-operation). When the Special Committee (The official Resolution proposed among other things the appointment of a Special Committee for the guidance of the Swarajists in their council-

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1. An Akali leader and President of the Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee formed to capture ownership and management of Sikh temples from the hands of hereditary Mahants who, the Committee complained, were unfit for such a sacred charge. Akalis offered Satyagraha, were arrested, and jailed and some even shot down by a Mahant's men.

work ) publishes its report, I will see in it, "Here is a patent proof of my doctrine ( of responsive cooperation )" and say that even the infidel of a Swarajist can work in a place of authority. In politics logic does not pay."

Shyamsundar Chakravarti : ( a staunch Gandhian and hence a 'No-changer' ) :

@ "Mahatma Gandhi, it is said, has accepted the Resolution. I scanned his look, his features; and all that I experienced during those 4 hours yesterday ( at the Subjects Committee's session ) has led me to oppose the Resolution. With arms upstretched I am crying out, but nobody listens to me ( ऊर्ध्व-बाहुर्विरोम्येष न च कश्चित् शृणोति मे । )—That is Mahatmaji's real attitude. And remember, "Where there is dharma, there is victory ( यतो धर्मः ततो जयः । ) Why do you say, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what the Lord wants you to do? Instead of supporting this Resolution I prefer the way of Tulsidas : तुलसी मस्तक तब नमै जब घनुषबाण ल्यो हाथ ।<sup>1</sup> Will not the passing of this Resolution shock Mahatmaji ?

I ask the Maulana ( Mohammad Ali ).....

@ Mohammad Ali interrupted: "But he wants to convert the sinners by next year."

@ Shyamsundar Chakravarti: "My friends are all saints; only their frock has been spoiled a little. The Resolution is a denial of Gandhism."

Pandit Motilal Nehru :

"I hold Pandit Malaviya with fatherly respect. I have love and devotion for Gandhiji. The basis of non-co-operation is perfect truth. But owing to our weakness, we sank that boat in mid-ocean. We co-operated with the Government till 1919.

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1. This devotee of Rama and author of the well-known Ramayana in Hindi once went to Pandharpur, where Lord Krishna's image was ( and is ) installed. Though he knew both Krishna and Rama were one, were both incarnations of Lord Vishnu, his love for Rama made him sing at Pandharpur, "O Lord, this head of Tulsi will bow down when You take the form of Rama and have Your bow and arrow in hand." Tulsidas then had the Vision of Rama in that form in Lord Krishna's image and he bowed down to it.



But the fruit of our loyal co-operation was Jallianwala Bagh (where unarmed and unsuspecting men, women, and children were shot down in hundreds by Gen. Dyer) and The Treaty of Sevres of 1920 (which severed the Turkish Empire and gave away some parts to European Powers, inspite of a promise to Muslim India against its dismemberment). To the extent that the Englishman is honest, he is dangerous to the community in his charge.<sup>1</sup> In the political dictionary of the world, there is nothing like justice or mercy. Owing to his own honesty, his deep spirituality, Mahatmaji thought that his opponents were equally above board. Non-co-operation can defy Government force, but it has got to defy the cunning diplomacy of the Government also. With beat of drums I asseverate that so long as Indians remain rigidly logical, they are not going to reach the goal "

One party thus branded the other as dishonest and the latter paid back in the same coin; the first proved the other wrong and the second repaid the compliment. And what was the residue after this mutual cancellation? What remained was nothing but pristine non-co-operation. But there was none in that assembly to whom this natural conclusion would strike. And so what was Gandhiji's position in the midst of this imbroglio? His position was straight, and clear as daylight. He proposed the resolution that confirmed the Patna Resolution, but he did not even vote on it. Neither did he vote on any other. But he is still clinging to the Swaraj Party, has at its request even allowed himself to be a member of the Working Committee of the Congress. And why? For the simple reason that like that famous picture of Hope, sitting on the world's globe, eyes blindfolded and all strings of Her lyre except one snapped, Gandhiji has pinned all his hopes on one thing—Khadi and its natural sequel civil disobedience. He has the

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1. There were some Englishmen who honestly believed that God had given them rule over the constitutionally unfit India for India's benefit—something like the now-forgotten belief in "The Whiteman's Burden" or "The Divine Right of Kings" of Charles-I.

faith that, tired like a broken soldier come for rest, the Swarajists will be disillusioned one day and return to his camp.

The statement that Gandhiji abstained from voting on all resolutions has one exception. Motilalji's resolution begins with the declaration of faith in civil disobedience as the final remedy and further on it states, "In view of the fact that the country is not today prepared for it...etc." A Delegate proposed an amendment to delete both these affirmations. This amendment secured a sizable number of votes in favour and only a few more against. That emboldened the proposer of the amendment to call for a re-count. Srimati ( President, Sarojini Naidu ) accepted this demand. A large number of hands—as many as 68—sprang up to support the amendment. That scared Lalaji ( Lala Lajpat Rai ). He exclaimed, "Good God ! If this amendment is carried, the whole Resolution will look so baseless ! Do please raise up your hand this time, Mahatmaji." That appeal went home, Gandhiji took out his hand from behind the upper covering and raised it. "Now, see ! I raise it only for your sake," he said and all those around burst into a loud laugh. But many other hands also were raised and the amendment was lost by 68 against 91. It seems to me he made this exception on the ground of the famous Sanskrit line : सर्वनाशे समुत्पन्ने अर्धं त्यजति पण्डितः । ( When all is about to be lost, the wise man gives away a half to save the other half ).

And now the third resolution which interested the masses. That was on the use of Hindustani. The original resolution in the constitution of the Congress stated that while the official language of the Congress was Hindustani, English could be used where necessary. The resolution was thus watered down by the concession and practically shelved. The amendment said that in every Congress function the language to be used was to be Hindustani or the regional language, but if a speaker was unable to speak in either of these two, he could use the English language as a matter of unavoidable necessity. When this amendment was proposed in the All



India Congress Committee, it met with an opposition that only strengthened my argument that the Congress was turning into a Diwan-e-khas ( House of Lords ). The resolution was vehemently contested, a large number saw compulsion in it. Many others called it a trick to bang the Congress door against the intelligentsia and expel it. Even after the resolution was passed by 58 votes against 50, it was allowed to be discussed—an instance of Sarojini Devi's uncommon generosity—and somebody spoke in Telugu, while someone else in Marathi. But in the end when votes were again taken, it was passed by 91 against 68. One or two members then gave a notice to oppose the Resolution even in the open session of the Congress! Fortunately, however, as the Congress session continued till late hours and as the President, Sarojini Devi, herself proposed that resolution, so as not to give anybody a chance to indulge in rigmarole, it was passed without further trouble.

Arrangement made for the Congress session—for lodging, boarding, sanitation etc.,—must be applauded as excellent. Gandhiji has referred to them in detail in an article in 'Navajivan,' and I need not dwell much upon it. This Congress excelled all previous sessions in its arrangements for the service of meals but in cleanliness the Belgaum session slightly surpassed this. And all this was due to the enthusiasm of one man in Cawnpore. Sri Fulchand Jain is an iron and hardware merchant. Though a millionaire, his behaviour was a model of humility and simplicity. Many would take him for an ordinary day labourer. He underwrote payment of all dining expenses and took that department in his charge. He was so engrossed in the work he had taken up, that he was never tempted to have a peep either into the Congress session or even into the Exhibition. The large contingent of servers in the dining hall was all raised by him from the town itself. He treated everyone who came for his meal with all the courtesy and attention due to his personal guest. The servers also treated the diners with such love and

consideration, as would induce them to ignore their rather dirty clothes.

The Volunteer Army also did their duty splendidly. There were many among them who cheerfully kept awake whole nights and they came to their posts of duty with clock-work regularity. The Scavenger Department—of high-caste volunteers of course—deserved greater admiration than that at other Congresses, since, not only did the workers treat the visitors with respect and politeness, but they went further and themselves threw a shovelful of earth on the night-soil after the visitor left the latrine.<sup>1</sup> But after this eulogy, may I be permitted to make one comment? Certainly it does not apply to all, only a few may be deserving it, but it is worth noting down for the good of the volunteers themselves. I had once to carry an acute pneumonia patient out of the Exhibition. The doctor had ordered his immediate removal. That was the work of the "Red Cross" group of volunteers. The doctor came up immediately, but there was no Red Cross Volunteer at hand to take the patient away. On a search it was found that many of them were in the Congress Pandal. The doctor went there and asked them to follow him immediately with a stretcher. But they refused to come out of the pandal, till the particular musical item they were listening to was over. The doctor came out and grumbled: "Those people won't understand how urgent this business is. They will come out only after hearing the music to the end!" This is only a stray incident and I am not criticizing for the pleasure of it, but to say that the volunteer who has been entrusted with such work must be prepared to do his part immediately he is asked and forego the fascination of the most melodious music or the most enthralling speech. The volunteer is expected to have the policeman's sense of duty and promptness and in addition, what the latter lacks in, sympathy and understanding.

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1. Improvised latrine, with a pit dug for receiving night-soil.



I have passed one adverse comment against the work of the Congress. I am now coming to another. Everyone held the question of Hindu-Muslim unity at an arm's length, as if it were a piece of live charcoal. Nobody dared to discuss it. The dirt in our minds has yet to be washed out. One cannot say that there were not any expressions of discontent in the speeches delivered in the A. I. C. C. or in the Congress session. We here ignore the speech of a fighter like Abhyankar and treat that of Maulana Shaukatali who kept a stiff upper lip as an exception. In all the rest of the speeches there was a deep undertone of disappointment, though not despair. Were it an all-round despair and nothing else, we had better shut up the Congress shop. But there is no doubt that there was a smouldering discontent in the speeches. But nothing is lost yet, if that discontent transforms itself into 'divine discontent'—an uneasiness that will not rest till the objective is gained. And let the 'proletariat' ( in social, intellectual, and economic standing ) clearly understand that if the Congress is turning 'bourgeoisie', the fault lies with the 'proletariat' class itself. If that class also had not failed to do its duty, nobody would have come out in the open with a threat to drive it out. But that class—the masses—contented itself with lusty cries of "Gandhiji-ki-jai" ( Victory to Gandhiji ). There is only one programme for them to carry out—the boycott of foreign goods. For implementing it even now they can take as much advice as they want from Gandhiji 'who has given up politics.' Like the Swarajists who have shown the record of their work in one year, it is still possible for the masses to do their part in a year, and invite Gandhiji to take up 'the celestial bow and arrows'—to quote Tulsidas' appeal for the vision of Lord Rama in a different context—and fight for their cause.

So much about the Congress session. I shall now close this article with a reference to one or two of the activities of the Congress. One of them was the Khadi Exhibition. The whole Congress week was started with the sacred ceremony of opening the Khadi Exhibition. At that ceremony Gandhiji said : "I

can think of nothing but Khadi. I did talk of the advent of 'Swaraj in a year', and I repeat even now that we are certain to get Swaraj in a year, if the whole country accepts Khadi. If nothing else is done, if even Hindus and Muslims do not unite, even then we can get Swaraj, if this single item of our work is done fully. But I also know that it is Khadi that is going to unite Hindus and Muslims in the end."

A detailed description of the Exhibition may be given by some one who has spent days in going through it. It is enough if one or two remarkable things are pointed out here. Out of the 125 shops more than 80 were exclusively Khadi shops. And their articles were exhibited in such an attractive manner, as to fasten one's eyes on them. There were wonderful varieties of Khadi brought from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra, Karnatak, Bengal, Bihar, Rajputana, Kashmir, etc. We have been seeing Khadi Exhibitions for the last 3 or 4 years. This Exhibition could easily show us what vigorous strides have been made in Khadi, in texture, design, and softness. The Khadi Bhandar (emporium) of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee had changed its name into All India Charkha Sangh Khadi Bhandar. Not only were there series in it of innumerable varieties in designs, colours, and borders—of all textures of your choice, but even cotton hand-gloves and underwears for the chest! The shop of the Khadi Pratishthan of Bengal had a specially attractive feature. At one corner there was an imposing heap of 7 maunds (1 maund=82 lbs.) of yarn, which, it was stated in big letters on a placard, was all spun in one hour by 10,000 spinners. At another corner lay a heap of 7 maunds of Khadi (series etc.) which was all the result of 'one day's labour'. It was thus a practical demonstration of the truth of the saying, 'Little drops of water make a mighty ocean.' The 'Kokti' Khadi (made from the cotton of a natural light-brown colour) was the *piece de resistance* of the Khadi shop from Bihar. But the fine long pieces of Khadi, made from ordinary white cotton, were sold there at prices lower perhaps than anywhere else. What a world of difference between those



days of 1919, when Gandhiji gave 17 annas ( 1 anna =  $\frac{1}{16}$ th of a rupee ) as spinning charge for 1 lb. of yarn, and this year of 1925, when one yard of fine Bihar-Khadi of 50 inches' breadth could be had for 12 annas ! And there was, of course, a large variety of ginning and carding tools and spinning wheels. Though this year's number of competitors for the Spinning Competition was less than last year's, the competition was definitely very hotly contested. Sri Usman of the Khadi Pratishthan, Bengal, Sri Satyanarayana of Bihar, and Sri Keshu ( Gandhiji's nephew's son ) had all to be bracketed for the first rank.

And one last word for 'The One Language Conference.' I have shown how the Congress Resolution for dealings in the national language was manhandled in the A. I. C. C. and thereafter. As regards those who argued there for 'Hindustani or English', I was reminded of those who pleaded for "Khadi or mill cloth." But just as the Patna Resolution and the popularity of Khadi Exhibition were relieving features in high-hatted turn the Congress was taking, so this 'One Language Conference' was a balm for one's pain at the way Hindustani was treated by the Congress. People like Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Prakasham ( both South Indians and hence formerly quite ignorant of Hindustani ) delivered their speeches in Hindi and they stated that they hoped to deliver their speeches in Hindi in the Congress also in the very near future. And Lala Lajpat Rai declared in a voice that shook the tent, "Except under special circumstances, and that too, not for my sake but only for that of the listeners, I am not going to speak on any occasion in any language but Hindustani." He kept this promise in letter and spirit at the Congress. He delivered there all his speeches first in Hindi and then gave a short summary in English.

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## APPENDIX

- I. In Bengal
- II. Deshbandhu C. R. Das
  - 1. The Great Bereavement
  - 2. Speech at public meeting, Khulna
  - 3. Letter to the Press
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- III. Reply to Lord Birkenhead
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- IV. To the South African Indians
- V. The latest fast
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## Appendix—I

### IN BENGAL

#### Shantiniketan

But has Bengal only one temptation in store for me ? Is not Shantiniketan an irresistible charm ? The inmates always give me real relief and peace. The sisters sing me their sweetest melodies. I had my fill of long and hearty talks with the Poet. I knew him better and, I am sure, he did me. There was nothing wanting in the love he showered on me. But his elder brother, Dwijendranath Tagore the 'Badodada' ( or Badoda = elder brother ) of the place—has for me all the love of an aged father. He cannot scan a speck in me, agrees with me in toto in thought or act, believes as much as I in my non-cooperation, my spinning-wheel, my Sanatanism ( orthodoxy ), my concept and method of Hindu-Muslim Unity, my crusade against untouchability, and finally, in Swaraj as but the corollary of them all. He simply refuses to see a single blemish in me—like a doting father. I can only record here that overwhelming love, that fascination for me. To translate it in the language of words is impossible. I am trying to deserve that adoration. Though past his four score, he has a child's eagerness to know things. He is well aware of the goings-on in India, has newspapers read to him and keeps abreast of the times. Both the brothers are deep students of the Vedas. Both are at home in Sanskrit. Mantras and Shlokas from the Upanishads and the Bhagavatgita are at their beck-and-call even in small talk.

And there are worshippers of the spinning wheel in Shantiniketan also. Some are regular, some not-so-regular spinners. Many wear Khadi. I hope the wheel will secure a still better place in this world-famous institution.

M. K. Gandhi

*Translated from Navajivan, dated 7-6-1925.*

## Appendix II-1

### DESHBANDHU C. R. DAS THE GREAT BEREAVEMENT

Calcutta,  
June 17, 1925

When the heart feels a deep cut, the pen refuses to move. I am too much in the centre of grief to be able to send much for the readers of *Young India* across the wire. The five days of communion with the great patriot which I had at Darjeeling brought us nearer to each other than we ever were before. I realised not only how great Deshbandhu was, but also how good he was. India has lost a jewel. But we must regain it by gaining Swaraj.

M. K. Gandhi

*Young India*, 18-6-1925



## Appendix—II-2

### SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING, KHULNA<sup>1</sup>

JUNE 17, 1925

You have heard from Acharya Ray what a terrible blow has befallen us, but I know that if we are true servants of the country, no blow, however great, will break our spirit. I was faced with a conflict of duties this morning as soon as the sad news was broken to me. It was my duty to leave for Calcutta by the first train available. It was also my duty to go through the programme you had fixed up for me. The spirit of service in me prompted me to finish the work here, but whilst I have preferred to stop here, to meet those who have come from distant places, I shall, instead of my usual speech on Congress work, devote it to the memory of the departed Deshbandhu. I am sure that my staying here to go through the programme in preference to running up to Calcutta will please his soul.

Mr. Das was one of the greatest of men.<sup>2</sup> I have had the privilege of knowing him for the last six years, and, when I parted from him only a few days ago at Darjeeling, I said to a friend that the closer I came to him the more I came to love him. I saw during my brief stay at Darjeeling that no thought but that of the welfare of India occupied his mind. He dreamed and talked of the freedom of India and of nothing else and I may tell you that, until the moment I took leave of him in Darjeeling, he was asking me to stop longer in Bengal to bring the different parties together, so that the energies of all may be concentrated on one purpose throughout my tour in Bengal.

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1. Seven addresses were presented to Gandhiji on behalf of the local bodies, the Municipality, the District Board and the People's Association. Sir P. C. Ray announced the news of the death of C. R. Das.

2. The newspaper reports that Gandhiji broke down and was unable to proceed for a minute or two.

Those who had differences with him, those who bitterly criticized him, did not hesitate to admit that no other man could take his place in Bengal. He was fearless. He was brave. His love for the young men of Bengal was boundless. There is not a young man but has told me that never had his request to Mr. Das for help gone in vain. He earned lakhs and gave away lakhs to the young men of Bengal. His sacrifice was matchless. And who am I to talk of his great intellect and his statesmanship ?

On more than one occasion at Darjeeling, he told me that the freedom of India depends on non-violence and truth. The Hindus and Mussalmans of India should know that his heart knew no difference between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I would like to tell all Englishmen in India that he bore no ill-will to them. "If I live, I live for Swaraj; if I die, I die for Swaraj," that was his vow to his motherland.

What shall we do to perpetuate his memory ? It is easy to shed tears, but no tears can help us or his nearest and dearest. Only if everyone of us, Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, and Christians, all who call themselves Indians, pledge ourselves to do the work in which he lived, moved, and had his being, shall we have done something. We are all believers in God. We should know that the body is ever perishing. The soul will never perish, not only the soul, but even the name of him who had served and sacrificed so much will remain immortal; and every one, young and old, who follow his example to ever so little an extent will help to perpetuate his memory. We have none of us his intellect, but we can imitate the spirit in which he served the motherland.

Mr. Das tried to learn spinning in Patna, and in Darjeeling I gave him spinning lessons and he promised me that he would try to learn spinning and spin so long as his body allowed. He had converted his Darjeeling House into a spinning club. His good wife pledged herself to spin at least for half an hour every day, excepting when she was ill, and his daughter who was there, his sister and sister's daughter were all regularly spinning.



Often would he say to me : 'I think it is essential to go to the Councils, but spinning is equally essential and not only is it essential, it is impossible to make Council-work effective without spinning.'

It is not for me to say how much he had done to bring the Hindus and Mussalmans together; and as to his love for the untouchables, I need only tell you what I heard last night from Namasudra leader at Barisal. He said that the first to help him with money was Mr. Das and the next was Dr. Ray. You cannot all go to the Councils, but you can do all the three things that were dear to him.

I regard myself as a loyal servant of India and a loyal brother and colleague of the late Mr. Das and as such I publicly declare that I shall, consistently with my principle, try to give henceforward, if it is possible, even more help to the followers of Mr. Das than I have up to now done in their Council programme. I pray to God that He may ever keep me from doing or speaking aught calculated to injure his work. Our differences regarding the Council-entry remained, but our hearts were one. Differences in political methods will remain until the end of time, but they should never separate people or make of them mutual enemies. The same love of the motherland which prompted me to do one thing prompted him to do something else and such honest difference means no detriment to the cause of the country. Not differences in methods, but insincerity is the curse.

During my stay at Darjeeling, I could see that Mr. Das's tenderness towards his political opponents was every day increasing, but I must not attempt to describe those sacred memories. Mr. Das was one of the jewels among the servants of the country. His service and his sacrifice were matchless. May his memory ever remain with us and may his examples inspire us to noble efforts ! Our way is long and dreary and nothing will stand us in good stead as our own reliance on ourselves. Self-reliance was Mr. Das's watchword and may it long inspire us. May his soul rest in peace.

*The Hindu*, 18-6-1925

M. K. Gandhi

### Appendix—II-3

#### LETTER TO THE PRESS<sup>1</sup>

It is due to the public for me to tell them that Shrimati Basanti Devi Das has had enormous strain put upon her ever since the death of her great husband. During the two days, I have been watching the continuous strain of mourners coming to her. Her unfailing good nature will not permit her to say 'no' to anybody. The result today has been an almost utter collapse. The public should know that she has a very weak constitution and she suffers from a weak heart. It is her wonderful courage, that is keeping her up during the crisis that has overtaken her in common with the nation. But even under normal circumstances it would not be possible for even a healthy person to bear the strain of visitors coming in from morning till late at night. After much persuasion she has permitted me to regulate the time for receiving visitors and, after consultation with friends including her medical advisers, I have suggested with her consent 5 p. m. to 7 p. m. for receiving visitors. May I respectfully urge all those who may wish to see the stricken lady to do so during the hours mentioned? If this request is respected, it will be possible to avert what threatens to be a complete collapse.

May I ask the vernacular press to translate this note?

*Calcutta, June 19, 1925*

M. K. Gandhi

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1. The message released to the Press in Calcutta, is in Gandhiji's own handwriting.



## Appendix—II-4

### CHITTARANJAN DAS

A giant among men has fallen. Bengal is like a widow today. A critic of the Deshbandhu remarked to me some weeks ago, "I find fault with him, it is true, but I must candidly confess to you that we have absolutely no one to replace him." When I related the anecdote at the meeting at Khulna, where I first heard the stunning news, Acharya Ray exclaimed, "It is but too true. If I could tell who can take Rabindranath's place as a poet, I could tell you who can take Deshbandhu's as a leader. There is no man in Bengal even anywhere near Deshbandhu. He was a hero of a hundred battles. He was generous to a fault. Though he earned lacs of rupees from his practice, he never permitted himself to be rich. And even gave up the mansion he had."

I came to know him personally for the first time in 1919 in connection with the Punjab Congress Inquiry Committee. I approached our meeting with suspicion and awe. I had heard from a distance of his roaring practice and his still more roaring eloquence. He had come with his motor car and with his wife and family and was living like a prince. My first experience was none too happy. We had met to consider the question of leading evidence before the Hunter Inquiry. I found in him all the legal subtleties and a lawyer's keen desire to 'floor' witnesses by cross-examination to expose the many wickednesses of the Martial Law administration. My own purpose was to do something different. I reasoned. The second interview put me at rest and dispelled all my fears. He was all reasonableness and gave a willing ear to all I said. It was my first intimate contact with so many public men in India. We knew one another from a distance. I had taken practically no part in Congress affairs. They merely knew me

as a South African warrior. But all my colleagues at once made me feel at home with them, none more so than this illustrious servant of India. I was supposed to be the Chairman of the Committee. "I shall say my say on points wherein we may differ, but I give you my assurance that I shall yield to your judgment." We had come near enough, before this assurance was volunteered, to embolden me to discover my previous suspicions to him. So, when he gave the assurance, I felt proud of a comrade so loyal, but at the same time I felt a little humiliated, because I knew that I was a mere novice in Indian politics and hardly entitled to such implicit trust. But discipline knows no rank. A king who knows its value submits to his page in matters where he appoints him as the sole judge. I occupied a place analogous to that of the page. And I record it with grateful pride that, among all the loyal colleagues I had the privilege of being associated with, none was more loyal than Chittaranjan Das.

At the Amritsar Congress, I could no longer claim the rights of discipline. There we were warriors, each holding in trust the welfare of the nation according to his ability. Here there was to be no yielding, but to pure reason or party exigencies. It was a perfect treat for me to put up my first fight on a Congress platform. All courteous, all equally unyielding; the great Malviyaji trying to hold the balance evenly, now pleading with one and now with the other. The President of the Congress, Pandit Motilalji, thought the game was all over. I had a rare time between Lokamanya and Deshbandhu. They had a common formula for the Reforms resolution. Each party wanted to convince the other. But there was no conviction. There was a stalemate and a tragedy behind, as many thought. The Ali Brothers whom I knew and loved, but did not know as I do now, pleaded with me for Deshbandhu's resolution. "You must not undo," said Mohammad Ali with his persuasive humility, "the great work you have done in the inquiry." But I was unconvinced.



Jairamdas', that cool-headed Sindhi, came to the rescue. He passed me a slip containing his suggestion and pleading for a compromise. I hardly knew him. Something in his eyes and face captivated me. I read the suggestion. It was good. I passed it on to Deshbandhu. "Yes, if my party will accept it," was his reply. Mark the loyalty again. He must placate his party—one secret of his wonderful hold on his people. It passed muster. Lokamanya with his eagle eyes was watching what was transpiring. Pandit Malaviyaji's Gangetic stream was pouring from the rostrum—his one eye looking towards the dais, where we manikins were deciding a nation's fate. Lokamanya said, "I don't want to see it, if Das has approved, it is good enough for me." Malaviyaji overheard it, snatched the paper from my hands, and, amid deafening cheers, announced that a compromise had been arrived at. I have given a detailed description of the incident, because it epitomizes the reasons of Deshbandhu's greatness and unquestioned leadership, firmness in action, reasonableness in judgment, and loyalty to party.

I must pass on. We came to Juhu, Ahmedabad, Delhi and Darjeeling. At Juhu he and Motilalji came to convert me. They had become twins. We had different viewpoints. But they could not brook any difference with me. Could they do so, they would go fifty miles, if I wanted them to go only twenty-five. But they would not surrender an inch even to the dearest friend, where the country's interest was at stake. We had a kind of compromise. We were unsatisfied, but not in despair. We were out to conquer one another. We met at Ahmedabad. Deshbandhu was in his element, watching everything as a tactician would. He gave me a splendid defeat." How

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1. Jairamdas Doulatram (b. 1892): Secretary, Sind Provincial Congress Committee; later became Minister for Food and Agriculture, Government of India; Governor of Bihar and Assam; member, Rajya Sabha.

2 The reference is to the A. I. C. C. meeting held in Ahmedabad from June, 27 to June 30, 1924. Vide Gandhiji's article "Defeated and Humbled Vol IV pp. 296.

many such defeats I would not have at the hands of friends like him now, alas, no more in body ! Let no one consider that we had become enemies, because of the Saha resolution. We believed each other to be in the wrong. But it was a difference between lovers. Let faithful husbands and wives recall scenes of their sacred differences and in their differences giving themselves pain in order to heighten the pleasure of a re-union. Such was our conditon. So we must meet again at Delhi, the polished Pandit with his terrible jaws, the docile Das inspite of the exterior which, to a passing onlooker, might appear rough. The skeleton of the pact was made and approved there. It was an indissoluble bond which one party has now sealed with death.

I must postpone Darjeeling for the time being. He used often to claim spirituality and used to say that he had no differences with me in religion. But though he never said it, he probably implied that I was too unpoetic to see the fundamental identity of our belief. I own that he was right. He demonstrated during these precious five days in every act of his that he was deeply religious. That he was not merely great, but he was good and growing in goodness. But I must reserve a description of the precious experiences of those five days for a later day. I felt forlorn when cruel fate snatched away Lokamanya from us. I have not yet got over the shock, for I am yet wooing his dearly beloved disciples. But Deshbandhu's withdrawal leaves me in a worse plight, For, when Lokamanya left us, the country was full of hopes. Hindus and Mussalmans appeared to be united for ever. We were on the eve of battle. Now ?

M. K. Gandhi

*Young India*, 25-6-1925



## Appendix II—5

### AT DARJEELING

July 10, 1925

I have almost promised the reader the sacred recollections of the five days I had with Deshbandhu at Darjeeling. I have called them among the precious in my life. As time passes, the preciousness increases. I must tell the reader why. Though I had lived under Deshbandhu's roof before, ours' was then a purely political meeting. We were both engrossed in our own allotted tasks. But in Darjeeling it was different. I had Deshbandhu wholly to myself. He was resting and I had gone solely to have communion with him. My going to Darjeeling for rest was a mere excuse. But for Deshbandhu's presence there I would not have gone in spite of the attraction of the snowy range. But in one of his pencil notes, which he had lately taken to writing to me, he said, "Remember, you are under my jurisdiction. I am Chairman of the Reception Committee. You have to include Darjeeling in your tour. This is a command." I wish I had kept those sweet notes of his, but alas ! they have gone the way hundreds of such documents in my possession have gone. I pleaded that I had the Working Committee to take. "Then bring the whole Committee. I shall arrange for their accommodation. The B. P. C. C. shall pay the fares of the members. I am wiring to Satkouri accordingly," was the telegraphic reply. I was unable to take the Working Committee to Darjeeling, but I promised to go as soon after that meeting as possible. And so I went. I had gone there for only two days. He kept me with him for five. He got Basanti Devi to ask Sjt. Phookan to postpone the Assam tour and himself postponed the Bengal tour by three days. I am mentioning these details to show the eagerness we had to be with each other. As it had turned out, Deshbandhu's approaching long sleep was preparing us for a close communion.

He was on a convalescent, if not on a sick-bed. He had need to be taken care of. But he insisted on attending to every detail regarding my comfort and that of my companions. His appointments must be on a lavish scale. He had ordered five goats to be brought from the plains. He would not have me miss my milk for a single meal. I had often come under Basanti Devi's sisterly care, but at Darjeeling I was the object of Deshbandhu's personal attention. Nor was there any artificiality about it. Hospitality was the badge of his clan. He related several striking anecdotes about their lavish hospitality. It was at Darjeeling that I came to know his great regard for strangers or political opponents. At his instance, Satish Babu of Khadi Pratishtan was sent for to discuss with him the plan we had settled of working hand-spinning and Khaddar in Bengal. I asked him where he would like Satish Babu to stay. "Of course, in this house," he said. "But we are over-crowded here," I said. "Certainly not. He can have my room for that matter," was the retort. Whilst I was thinking of him and his overworked partner, he thought of Satish Babu's comfort. "Besides," he said, "I know that Satish Babu thinks I am prejudiced against him. He is a comparative stranger to me. You know that I do not worry about my other friends. They cannot misunderstand me. Satish Babu must stay in this house."

We talked of different political groups in Bengal and, incidentally, I told him of the charges of bribery and corruption brought against the Swaraj Party. I mentioned to him the fact that Sir Surendranath had invited me to go to his house again before leaving Bengal. He said, "Do go and tell him all about our conversations and my emphatic denial of all charges of bribery and corruption. I am prepared to retire from public life, if one such charge against the Party can be proved to be true. The fact is that Bengal political life is one of mutual jealousy and backbiting. The phenomenal rise and success of the Swaraj Party have become unbearable to some people. I want you, therefore, thoroughly to go into all the charges that may be brought against the Party and give your considered



judgment. I assure you I do not believe in dishonesty any more than you do. I know that my country cannot be free by dishonest means. You will be rendering a distinct service, if you can bring all the parties together or, at least, rid the air of mutual recrimination. You should specially speak to Shyam Babu and Suresh Babu. Why do they not come to me, if they distrust or suspect anything? We may hold different views, but we need not swear at each other." "What about a similar charge against *Forward*? I do not know, because I do not read these newspapers; but I have heard complaints of that nature against *Forward* also," I interposed. "Yes, *Forward* may have been guilty. You know that I do not write for or supervise *Forward* as you do in case of *Young India*. But if people will bring such things to my notice, I will gladly investigate and set matters right. You will, I think, find *Forward* always on the defensive, but one may cross the boundary line even in putting up a defence. As you know, I am investigating a serious case of unpardonable exaggeration in *Forward*, if the facts are as they have been put before me. I assure you I have written most strongly about it. I have even sent for the writer." Thus the conversation went on. found, throughout it all, a scrupulous care about justice to opponents and an honourable meeting of all parties.

"What do you say to convening an All-Parties' meeting, or, as Mr. Kelkar suggests it, of the All India Congress Committee?" I asked. "I do not want it at present," he replied. "The A. I. C. C. is useless, because we, Swarajists, must play the game and give the fullest trial to the new franchise. I tell you, I am more and more coming round to your position about the charkha. I am afraid we have not played the game everywhere. Here in Bengal, as you have said, you had no opposition from any party. But had I not been laid up, I would have shown the charkha to be a swinging success. I tell you, I intended to work the charkha whole-heartedly and I wanted you to help me in the organization; but as you see, I have been helpless. No revision can take place this year. On

the contrary, we must all give the new franchise the fairest trial. I am going to write to the Maharashtra friends about it."

Of the proposed All-Parties' Contence he said, "We must not have the Conference just yet. I expect big things from Lord Birkenhead. He is a strong man and I like strong men. He is not as bad as he speaks. If we hold the meeting, we must say something on the situation. I do not want to embarrass him by pitching our demands higher than he may be prepared to grant at the present moment. I do not want to disappoint him by understating our demands. We must watch and wait. We can lose nothing by so doing. If his statement is not satisfactory, that may be the time for calling a meeting of all parties to decide upon a common course of action." This was to me a novel reason for not convening the proposed meeting, so I said, "I shall not call the meeting unless you and Motilalji want it, or unless I get a representative requisition. But I must confess to you that I do not share your faith. Look at the Hindu-Muslim differences which are widening. Contemplate the Brahmin and non-Brahmin quarrels. See the political parties in Bengal. We have apparently never been so weak as now. And don't you agree with me that Englishmen have never conceded anything to weakness? I feel that we must make ourselves irresistible before we may expect anything big from England." Deshbandhu became impatient and said, "You are arguing like a logician. I am speaking to you what I feel. Something within me tells me we are in for something big." I argued no more. I bowed my head in reverence before a faith so robust. I told him I had great regard for English character, I had inestimable friends among them, but I saw that his faith in them was greater than mine. Let Englishmen know what a great friend they have lost in Deshbandhu.

The Pir question at Calcutta troubled him a great deal. He was anxious that I should do what I could for its settlement. He said: "I want to placate the Mussalman feeling. I had hoped that, after the walling-in of the tomb, there would be nothing more heard about it. But now that there is a strong



agitation about the disinterment, I cannot resist it. The law seems clearly against the burial on unauthorized ground. Neither Subhash nor Suhrawardy had any authority to grant the permission. But I must carry the Mussalmans with me in all I do. I am trying to induce them to remove the body themselves. I have every hope that they will listen to me."

We discussed the Tarakeshwar affair and the result was embodied in a statement which was to be signed by him and me if it was necessary. We discussed too Dr. Besant's manifesto<sup>1</sup>. It was the first in point of time to be discussed as he had promised an early reply to her. The result of that discussion was a letter that he despatched to Dr. Besant.

But the thing that most occupied our time was a discussion of the charkha and Khaddar, especially in their bearing on village reorganization on which he had set his heart and for which he had collected nearly 1½ lacs of rupees. I told him that his scheme was too much ambitious to be put into force all at once, that I had studied the skeleton which was shown to me by Pratap Babu and that I had strongly disapproved of it as wholly impractical. Deshbandhu had not seen it. He agreed that it was unworkable. In fact, Pratap Babu had himself admitted its unworkability. I told Deshbandhu that he should make the wheel the centre of all other village activities and that the latter should be made to revolve round the wheel and that they could be added wherever the charkha obtained a footing. I suggested, too, that this village organization should be independent of all political turmoil and, therefore, it should be entrusted to an expert committee with permanent powers whose sole function would be to carry on the village work. I suggested that he should invite Satish Babu to form a Committee and take charge of the work on behalf of the Congress. I have reproduced merely the substance of the argument. Deshbandhu not only agreed with it all, but he took down notes and was eager to enforce the scheme at once. He said that he would like to discuss it fully with

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1. Vide p 47

Satish Babu whilst I was in Darjeeling, and then give instructions for passing the necessary resolution by the Congress Committee. Satish Babu was, therefore, immediately sent for. He came. At first we three had discussions and then I was freed for other work and Deshbandhu had various chats with Satish Babu alone. The latter was to be the first member of the Board. Satkouri Babu was to be the second member and they two were to select a third. They were to have a part of the village fund at once placed at their disposal and I was to give to the Board or Committee a part of the purse that was to be presented to me at Jalpaiguri. This committee, in order to place it on a firm footing, was even to be registered, if necessary under the Benevolent Societies Registration Act which, Deshbandhu said, he would study for the purpose. Deshbandhu told Pratap Babu of the discussions and decision with instructions to carry out the decision.

Such was his passion for the wheel and therethrough of village organization. "If Lord Birkenhead disappoints us," he said, "I do not know what we should do in the Councils. But this I know, that we must prosecute your programme of the charkha and organize our villages. We must become an industrious nation once more. We must bring power in the Councils. I must control the young men of Bengal. I must demonstrate, with the aid of the Government if possible, and without if necessary, the possibility of achieving Swaraj without violence. Non-violence has become as much my final creed, as yours for the deliverance of our country. We can have no civil disobedience without non-violence. And without the ability to offer civil resistance, there is no Swaraj. We need not have to offer it in fact, we must have the ability. I must find work for my impatient young men. I agree with you that there is danger of corruption creeping into our camp, if we do not take care. I have learnt from my *guru* the value of Truth in all our dealings. I want you to live with him for a few days at least. Your need is not the same as mine. But he has given



me strength I did not possess before. I see things clearly which I saw dimly before."

But I dare not carry on this part of the conversation any further. I can only tell the reader that it developed into a spiritual discussion, or rather discourse, for it was all an endless stream on his part of what he was then doing and what he proposed to do when he was stronger. The discourse gave me an insight into his deeply spiritual nature which I did not possess before. I did not know that it was his ruling passion, as it is that of so many distinguished Bengalees. When he first talked, now four years ago, of building a hut on the banks of the Ganges and repeated it at Sassoon Hospital when he came to see me, I laughed within myself at the idea and jocosely said that, when he built his hut, I must share it with him. But I discovered my error at Darjeeling. He was more in earnest about it than about his politics, on which he had entered only by force of circumstances.

Nor need the reader consider that I have exhausted all the topics we discussed. I have endeavoured to recall only the principal things. I have omitted his picture of men, both European and Indian.

But if our main conversation always turned round the char-kha, our daily routine was not otherwise. The whole household had become a spinning club. Mahadev, Satish Babu, and I had become expert teachers. We all had our share of teaching Deshbandhu. He had begun his lessons seriously at Patna. He had asked Rajendra Babu for a teacher. But he was too ill then to make much progress. At Darjeeling he had better hope. His left shoulder was aching, but when the ache was gone, he would do much better, he said. "But mind, I am very stupid with my hands. Ask my wife how helpless I am." "Yes," said Basanti Devi, "he calls me in even for unlocking his little box." "You women are too cunning for men. You keep your husband helpless even in small matters, so as to have your complete mastery over him," I said. The whole house seemed to come down with the ringing of Deshbandhu's

laughter. He had both the capacity for heartily weeping and laughing. His weeping he did in secret, like his wife. During this overwhelming grief, Basanti Devi has disdained to weep even before his dearest ones. But Deshbandhu could laugh before crowds of people and cover them with the sunshine of his laughter. Our serious discussion started with laughter which the whole of that big household heard. He knew that I liked sitting cross-legged. He was reclining in his bedstead. I was in a chair. He could not bear the sight of my sitting in the chair with my legs dangling uncomfortable or attempting to cross them in the chair. So he had a pillow put opposite him on his bedstead and a handspun rug arranged on the bedding to make a gadi. He seated me on it. "Do you know, what this reminds me of?" I said, as I sat comfortably on it just face to face with him. "My memory goes back to over forty years ago. It was thus my wife and I sat when we were married. The only thing now lacking is the hand-clasp. I wonder what Basanti Devi has to say to all this." And the house rang with a laughter, alas !, no more to be heard.

\*             \*             \*

The foregoing recollections were written at Bankura on the 8th instant. Lord Birkenhead's speech was published at Calcutta on the 9th and I glanced at it on the same day. I am writing this note on the 10th. I have now carefully read the speech. It gives an added value to the recollections. I know what a shock Lord Birkenhead's speech would have proved to Deshbandhu. Somehow or other, he had made up his mind that Lord Birkenhead was going to do something big. In my humble opinion, the speech is a severe disappointment, not so much for what it does not give, as for the utter inactualities for which the Secretary of State for India has made himself responsible. Every fundamental position that he takes up is challenged by almost every educated Indian, no matter to what party he may belong. The pity of it is that probably he believes all he says. Englishmen have an amazing capacity for self-dece-



ption. It, no doubt, saves them many an un-comfortable situation, but it does infinite harm to the world, a large part of which they rule. They delude themselves into the belief that they do so chiefly, if not wholly, for its benefit. I must endeavour to examine this curious performance, if possible, next week. Meanwhile, we owe a duty to the dead man who is one of the parties responsible for making English politicians think about India more than they did before. How would he have acted if he had been alive? There is no cause for despair. There is less for anger. We had no data for expecting anything from Lord Birkenhead. What he has said in praise of English rule in India is not new. A diligent sub-editor has only to take up his scissors and paste to cut out parallel passages, in almost identical words, from his illustrious predecessors. The speech is a notice to us to set our own house in order. I for one am thankful for it. I have also Deshbandhu's prescription before me. I have shared it with the reader.

*Young India*,  
16-7-1925

M. K. Gandhi

### Appendix III-1

#### REPLY TO LORD BIRKENHEAD

Gandhiji addressed the following letter to Pandit Motilal Nehru, after having attended the meeting of the Swaraj Council and the Working Committee of the Congress at Calcutta and after an informal discussion with members of the A. I. C. C. present on the occasion :

Calcutta, July 19, 1925

Dear Panditji,

During these few days I have been taxing myself what special exclusive contribution I can make to the memory of Deshbandhu and the situation created by Lord Birkenhead's speech and I have come to the conclusion that I should absolve the Swaraj Party from all obligations under the pact of last year. The result of this act is that the Congress need no longer be a predominantly spinning association. I recognize that under the situation created by the speech the authority and the influence of the Swaraj Party need to be increased. I would fail in my duty, if I neglected a single step within my power to increase the strength of the Party. This can be done if the Congress becomes a predominantly political body Under the Pact the Congress activity is restricted to the constructive programme mentioned therein. I recognize that this restriction should not continue under the altered circumstances that face the country. Not only do I, therefore, personally absolve



you from the restriction, but I propose to ask the forthcoming meeting of the A. I. C. C. to do likewise and place the whole machinery of the Congress at your disposal, so as to enable you to bring before that body such political resolutions as you may consider necessary in the interest of the country. In fact, I would have you regard me at your disposal in all such matters in which I can conscientiously serve you and the Swaraj Party.

Yours sincerely  
M. K. GANDHI

### Appendix III—2

#### PANDIT MOTILAL NEHRU'S REPLY

The following is Pandit Motilal Nehru's reply to the above :

Calcutta, July 21, 1925

Dear Mahatmaji,

The Swaraj Party is under a deep debt of gratitude to you for your generous support on the irreparable loss it sustained by the premature death of its great leader Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. You have now redoubled that debt by the noble offer contained in your letter of the 19th July. It seems to me that the only way to repay that debt is to accept your offer in all humility and strive with your help to meet the situation created by Lord Birkenhead's speech in the spirit of the last pronouncement of Deshbandhu made at Faridpur. Lord Birkenhead seems to have spurned the honourable co-operation offered by Deshbandhu and to have made it clear that in our struggle for freedom we have still to face many unnecessary obstacles and many ill-informed opponents. Our plain duty at this stage is, therefore, to go ahead along the line chalked out for us and prepare the country for an effective challenge to irresponsible and insolent authority. In the words of the great Faridpur speech, "We shall fight, but fight clean, not forgetting that when the time for settlement comes, as it is bound to come, we have to enter the Peace Conference not in a spirit of arrogance but with becoming humility, so that it may be said of us that we were greater in our achievement than in our adversity." You have now enabled us to fulfil the message of Deshbandhu with the united strength of the Congress at our back. Under such auspices we need entertain no misgiving about the result,



which can only be what it has invariably been in all ages and countries, the ultimate triumph of Right over Might.

I desire to say one word about the Pact from which you have so generously absolved the Swaraj Party. As you know, both Deshbandhu and I had no desire to have the conditions of the Pact altered in the course of the year. We wanted to give it a full and fair trial and it was our wish to help personally in every way in making it a success. Ill-health and many preoccupations prevented us both from doing as much for it as we had wished, but I entirely agree with you that a new situation has been created by recent events and under the circumstances the Congress should without loss of time adapt itself to this situation by making itself a predominantly political body. I, therefore, welcome your offer. This, however, does not mean that the Congress should give up in any way the constructive programme. All our efforts would be of little avail, if they are not backed up by the organised strength of the nation.

We shall now go ahead in full confidence with our work inside the Councils and outside in the country and if the occasion demands organized action in the country I need not assure you that the Swaraj Party will whole-heartedly help in such activity.

Yours Sincerely,  
MOTILAL NEHRU

## Appendix IV

### TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS

What solace may I give you ? Whenever things go wrong with you, you send me cables. You send me greetings on my birthdays also. My friend Umar Haji Amad Zaveri gives me by wire the news of his nephew's demise. He remembers me as a friend and well-wisher.

You are perfectly right in regarding me as your friend and servant. But my friendship and serviceability are of little use today. I will not say they are entirely useless, since I have the faith that my success here means your success there. I cannot be useful to you more directly than that today. I can only assure you at the present moment that your question is my question. I have not forgotten it and I never can.

My condolence to Umar Sheth. I share in his bereavement. I have rarely come across men as pure as he. May God grant him solace and peace. The smiling face of Haji Ismael rises up before my eyes just now.

I got three cables at the same time.

The second was a greetings telegram for my birthday. What a charming greeting ! "May you live long for the service of the world !" that is the wording of that Johannesburg cablegram. That shows you understand me. I wish to live only for that object—service. Death for it may be as dear to me as life for it. When I was serving there in your midst, deep down in me I was realizing even then that I was serving the world. Here also in my service of India lies the service of the world. And in the service of the world is hid my own self-interest, i. e., service of my Self. God refuses point-blank to grant me liberation, so long as every fibre of my being is not absorbed in the service of the world, so long as the sorrows of the world do not completely become my sorrows. And how can I ever serve the



world, if I do not serve my neighbouring Indian brothers and sisters ? Hence, I warmly welcome your wire : Go on helping me in my work.

The third one comes from Amad Sheth. He warns me, let not sailors going there from here add to the ignominy from which they suffer there. Sailors, at least, will not go there it appears. But the Congress cannot claim any credit for it, — or claim it only to the extent that its tremendous non-co-operation programme has impressed itself so indelibly that the Government will think twice before sending sailors.

But your chief sorrow is the Damoclese's sword of the coming law. Efforts are already being made here to ward off that danger. Agitation is set on foot in the Councils also. But real help can be given only when our intrinsic power here increases. And still greater help lies in your own innate power. Our six years' struggle of Satyagraha has taught us the lesson : 'Self-help is the best help.' If you can exhibit quiet strength there, the power of the whole world will stand by your side. Real effort, therefore, must come from your side. I have also wired to you to that effect.

Your friend and servant,  
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Patna, October, 1925.

## Appendix V

### THE LATEST FAST

This the latest ( seven days' ) fast of mine which is closing to-morrow morning could not be kept from the public in spite of my attempt to the contrary. It has brought many inquiries and some angry protests.

The public may rest perfectly at ease about my health. It is something for me to be able to write this myself on the seventh day of my fast. But by the time this is in the hands of the reader, I hope to be almost up and doing.

The alarm was felt on the fourth day, when I was much exhausted with work. In my vanity I had thought that, during the comparatively brief fast, I would be able to work all the full seven days. In fairness to myself I must say that much of the work I did during the three and a half days was inevitable, as it was connected with the object of the fast. But as soon as I realised that I had overworked myself, I stopped all work, and on the last day I am stronger than on the fourth.

But the public will have to neglect my fasts and cease to worry about them. They are a part of my being. I can as well do without my eyes, for instance as I can without fasts. What the eyes are for the outer world, fasts are for the inner. And much as I should like the latest fast to be the very last in my life, something within me tells me that I might have to go through many such ordeals and, who knows, much more trying. I may be wholly wrong. Then the world will be able to write an epitaph over my ashes : 'Well deserved, thou fool !' But for the time being my error, if it be one, must sustain me. Is it not better that I satisfy my conscience, though misguided, because not perfectly pure, than that I should listen to every voice, be it ever so friendly but by no means infallible ? If I had a guru,—and I am looking for one, I should surrender myself body and soul to him. But in this age of unbelief a



true guru is hard to find. A substitute will be worse than useless, often positively harmful. I must, therefore, warn all against accepting imperfect ones as gurus. It is better to grope in the dark and wade through a million errors to Truth than to entrust oneself to one who "knows not that he knows not." Has a man ever learnt swimming by tying a stone to his neck?

And who shall lose by erroneous fasting? Of course, only myself. But I am public property, it is said. So be it. But I must be taken with all my faults. I am a searcher after truth. My experiments I hold to be infinitely more important than the best-equipped Himalayan expeditions. And the results? If the search is scientific, surely there is no comparison between the two. Let me, therefore, go my way. I shall lose my usefulness the moment I stifle the still small voice within.

Well, this fast has nothing to do with the public. I am conducting a big institution called the Satyagrahashram. Trusting friends have given me already over two lacs of rupees for land and building alone. They are paying for its annual upkeep not less than eighteen thousand rupees per year. They do so in the hope that I am building up character. There are grown up men and women in the Ashram. There are boys and girls. The latter are trained to remain unmarried as long as possible. At no place within my knowledge do women and girls enjoy so much freedom as at the Ashram. It is my best and only creation. The world will judge me by its results. No man or woman, no boy or girl, can live there, if I do not want them. I believe that it contains some of the purest characters we have in India. If I am to deserve the implicit trust of friends who support it, I must be double vigilant since they will neither examine the accounts, nor the activity of the Ashram. I discovered errors among the boys and somewhat among the girls. I know that hardly a school or any other institution is free from the errors I am referring to. I am anxious to see the Ashram free from errors which are sapping the manhood of the nation and undermining the boys. Experience gained in two schools under my control has taught me that punishment does

not purify, if anything, it hardens children. In such cases in South Africa I have resorted to fasts with, in my opinion, the best of results. I have resorted to the same process here and let me say of a milder type. The basis of the action is mutual love. I know that I possess the love of the boys and the girls. I know too that if the giving up of my life can make them spotless, it would be my supreme joy to give it. Therefore, I could do no less to bring the youngsters to a sense of their error. So far the results seem to be promising.

What, however, if I cannot perceive the fruit? I can but do the will of God, as I feel it. The result is in His disposing. This suffering for things, great and small, is the keynote of Satyagraha.

But why should not the teachers perform the penance? They cannot, so long as I remain the chief. If they had fasted with me, all work would have come to a standstill. As with big institutions, so with small ones. As the king must share the sins of his subjects even as he arrogates to himself all their virtues, so must I a tiny chosen king in the little Ashram alone for the sins of the least among the children of the Ashram, if I may proudly claim the presence in it of many noble characters. If I am to identify myself with the grief of the least in India, aye, if I have the power, the least in the world, let me identify myself with the sins of the little ones who are under my care. And so doing, in all humility, I hope some day to see God-Truth face to face.

30th November, 1925

M. K. Gandhi



## Appendix V

### THE ANNUAL DEMONSTRATION

Only those who are devoid of all imagination could, after witnessing the demonstration at Cawnpore during the Congress week, say that the influence of the Congress was on the wane. The belittling process commenced with its birth. It has, however, survived forty summers and promises to survive many more.

The demonstration began with the dazzling splendour that greeted the President on her arrival at Cawnpore. The feeble voice of protest was hushed in the midst of the grateful shouts of thousand who had gathered to do honour to the first Indian woman who was to preside over the deliberations of the great national assembly. The roads were one vast mass of beaming human faces. Every balcony was occupied by the women of Cawnpore who were eager to see the face of Shrimati Sarojini Devi. The merchants vied with one another in making the decorations effective and striking. Congress ground was packed to overflowing. The pandal was filled on the opening day. No session had so many European visitors as this. The delegates were attentive and yielded implicit obedience to the chair. The President by her tact, perseverance, punctuality and sweetness combined with firmness came up to all the expectations that were raised of her by friends and severely disappointed her critics who had prophesied a complete failure. Her address—the shortest yet written by any President of the Congress—was a prose-poem. In the brief space of twelve octavo pages she had summarised the struggles and aspirations of the people in whose name she spoke. True, there was nothing new in the address. She had bargained to give nothing new. She had sketched no policy. That was left by design to the leader of the Swaraj Party, Pandit Motilal Nehru. Her virtue lay in her

unobtrusiveness, in her impartiality, in her allowing herself to be led even while she was leading. The secret of her success lay in her womanliness which she let her people see in every act of hers.

Of the important resolutions nothing much need be said in these columns. They cover all the important matters that have agitated the country during the past twelve months. The South African resolution was the first in point of time and immediate importance. Whatever be said to the contrary, I hold that the proposed bill is in breach of the Smuts-Gandhi agreement of 1914. For the royal veto there are many precedents. If it may not be used under any circumstance whatsoever, it should be part of the royal instruction. If it may be used under certain circumstances, that circumstance will, undoubtedly, arise when and if the preposterous bill passes the Union Legislature.

The resolution about the Congress franchise and the debate on it in the Subjects Committee demonstrate the growing popularity of Khaddar. It is clear that the Swarajists may not leave Khaddar and still retain their hold on the electorate. Indeed the tendency in the Subjects Committee was towards stiffening the Khaddar condition. If it has the supreme economic and national value that is claimed for it, it is properly a part of the franchise qualifications. One has a right to hope that the Congress after having passed the resolution by an overwhelming majority, the members will loyally and conscientiously fulfil the condition imposed by themselves. No inquisition is necessary where members are willing to observe common honesty.

The Council's resolution is an elaborate affair. It is a clear notice to the Government and an equally clear indication to the electors as to what they are to expect from the Swaraj Party. The emphasis laid on Civil Disobedience is, in my opinion, quite appropriate. No nation can possibly march forward without a sanction to enforce its will. The re-iteration



of faith in Civil Disobedience means that the representatives of the nation have no faith in an armed rebellion. Civil Disobedience may be a far cry. It may be nearer than many imagine. Time is irrelevant. Cultivation of the spirit of non-violent resistance is everything. So long, therefore, as the Congress believes in Civil Disobedience and its will remains unenforced, it must keep the former before the people and teach them that it is a complete and effective substitute for armed rebellion and that the latter is out of the question for Indian conditions and the former perfectly possible, if people, or rather the volunteers, could be persuaded to observe and enforce self-restraint under the gravest provocations.

So far as the remaining in or going out of the Councils is concerned, Swarajists must be regarded the best judges of their own position and the condition of the Councils. They are the experts and others must not obstruct them, if they will carry out the Patna resolution now confirmed by the Congress.

Superficial observers may regard the split in the Congress camp as unfortunate. Unfortunate in a way it undoubtedly is. We would all like perfect agreement among us if such was possible. But surely it is not unfortunate that we should bravely and honestly confess our fundamental differences and work them out. It is the surest sign of growth. We will not attain Swaraj by mechanical agreements which we do not mean. In a vast country like ours, there is room enough for many schools of thought. And so long as they respect one another and honestly push forward their views, the people can only gain by their presentation. Forced suppression of one's views is a sign of decay and violence. I would warn the public, therefore, against being pessimistic over the so-called split in the Swarajists Camp.

Then there are the resolutions about the Bengal Ordinance prisoners, the Gurudwara prisoners and the Burma measures aimed at the Indian settlers. They are all an indication of our present impotence and an additional count in the indictment against the Government.

The resolution about the use of Hindustani is a great advance in public opinion. It is undoubtedly cruel to the majority members of the A. I. C. C. or the delegates that our proceedings should be still largely conducted in English. We must arrive at a final decision some day. When we do, it must cause some inconvenience, some heart-burning for a time. But the sooner we begin to conduct our proceedings in Hindustani the better it will be for national growth.

Young India,  
January 7, 1926.

M. K. Gandhi.



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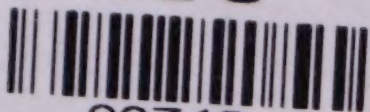
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